DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 203 871 IR 009 458

AUTHOR Corder-Bolz, Charles, Ed.
TITLE Television and Youth: Proceedings of the National Workshop (Washington, D.C., March 12-13, 1980).
INSTITUTION Southwest Educational Development Lab., Austin, Tex.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE Mar 80
NOTE 217p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC09 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Broadcast Industry; Childrens Television; *Educational Television; Elementary Secondary Education; Parent Associations; *Programing (Broadcast); *Television Viewing; *Youth; Youth Leaders
IDENTIFIERS *Critical Viewing

ABSTRACT

The workshop documented in these proceedings had four purposes: (1) to develop dialogue within and between the several sectors of society whose interests and expertise are focused upon the role of television in the lives of children and youth; (2) to increase awareness of the need for making the television viewing experience of children and youth positive, beneficial, and educational; (3) to encourage and assist the development of programmatic efforts within organizations; and (4) to identify and develop the foundations for collaborative efforts among organizations. Each workshop participant was a member of a special interest group and a member of a task force. Each of the four special interest groups (educators, youth leaders, parent leaders, and TV industry) developed recommendations which could be taken back to the representatives' organizations and shared with similar organizations. Each of the four task forces, with equal representation of parent leaders, educators, youth leaders, and industry professionals, developed recommendations for collaborative efforts at the national and local levels. (Author/LLS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED203871

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Television and Youth:

Proceedings of the National Workshop

held at
Washington, D.C.

on
March 12 and 13, 1980

edited by

Charles Corder-Bolz
Division of Learning and Media Research
Southwest Educational Development Laboratory
Austin, Texas 78701

The National Workshop on Television and Youth was part of the Critical TV Viewing Skills Project funded under a contract from the U. S. Office of Education, DHEW. The content of the presentations, papers, and recommendations prepared for or developed at the Workshop are the contributions of those people given credit and no endorsement by the Office of Education or by DHEW is to be inferred.

IR009458

INTRODUCTION

The use of TV programs as adjuncts to classroom activities in public schools has been very successful. Television scripts have been used to teach reading, and many teachers' guides to programs have been published and distributed prior to scheduled broadcasts.

The ideas expressed by participants of the conference, "Television, the Book and the Classroom," sponsored jointly by the U. S. Office of Education and the Library of Congress in April, 1978, further contributed to the development of the U. S. Office of Education's program to develop critical television viewing skills in students. The USOE program was "designed to bridge the gap between what children learn from their TV sets and what they learn in their school classrooms."

USOE's two-year program, begun October 1, 1978, covered two phases: planning, design, prototype development, and field testing during the first year; and national distribution and training during the second year. Four contractors were selected: Southwest Educational Development Lab for elementary school (kindergarten through fifth grade) students, WNET for middle school students, Far West Educational Lab for secondary school students, and Boston University for post-secondary school students.

The objectives of the Critical TV Viewing Skills Project were to enable and encourage students to learn critical TV viewing skills and to use these skills to become evaluative and reasoning consumers of television. As delineated by the U. S. Office of Education, critical television viewing skills are those factors which enable a person to (1) distinguish among a wide range of program elements, (2) make judicious use of their viewing time, (3) understand the psychological implications of commercials, (4) distinguish fact from fiction, (5) recognize and appreciate differing and/or opposing views, (6) understand the style and content of dramatic presentations, documentaries, public affairs, news, and other television programming, and (7) understand the relation between television and the printed word.

A major priority of the U. S. Office of Education program was the dissemination of information and the raising of awareness about the need for students to learn and to use critical TV viewing skills. Leaders in education, parent, and youth-serving agencies and organizations on the national, state and local levels were involved in many aspects of the four contractors' projects. Each of the four projects culminated in a series of workshops held around the country. While the workshops varied considerably in format, style, participants and length, the general objective was to train leaders who in turn could train and assist others in their organizations.

As part of their project, the Southwest Educational Development Lab organized a national workshop of leaders in four major areas: television industry, education, parent associations, and youth-serving organizations. While several prior meetings, conferences and symposia involving representatives of several of these areas had been held in previous years, the dialogue usually turned negative and counter-productive. In short, there had been little productive dialogue among representatives from all four areas. People in each area have their own perceptions of the benefits and problems of television and these are often construed as being in conflict with the perceptions of the people in another area. Two important issues had become clear. Forst, people in the areas of parent organizations, youth-serving organizations, education and the television industry have information, insights and resources which would be very helpful to each other, but largely have not been able to interact constructively and thus fail to benefit from each others' information, insights and information. Second, to achieve the goal of making the television viewing experience beneficial to youth, the collaborative efforts of educators, parents, the television industry, and youth leaders is essential. It is now apparent that parents can't achieve this goal alone. It is similarly apparent that the television industry alone cannot achieve the goal without help. Furthermore, the assistance of youth leaders and educators is needed. Therefore, SEDL organized a special workshop to initiate the four-way dialogue. The ground rules were made very clear. Regardless of previous rhetoric, the workshop was not a forum to discuss why the television industry had not provided better programming; was not a forum to discuss why parents had not used better child-rearing approaches; was not a forum to discuss why teachers had not made more educational use of television, and was not a forum to discuss why youth-leaders had not been more involved in helping youth use television more wisely. The workshop was indeed the time and place for representatives of the four areas to begin the process of working together.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people provided the needed skills, energy, and enthusiasm to make the National Workshop on Television and Youth successful.

Very special thanks to the five group leaders who made the discussions fruitful: Karen Bartz of Campfire, Inc., Jean Dye of the National PTA, Rosemary Potter, a reading specialist for the Pinelles County Florida Schools, Lee Polk of Gold Key Entertainment, and Debbi Bilowit of WNET.

The five speakers provided us all with a sense of direction: George Comstock of Syracuse University, Patrick Daly of the American Federation for Teachers, Thomas Bolger of the National Association of Broadcasters, Virginia Sparling of the National PTA, and Abbott Washburn of the Federal Communication Commission.

Many thoughtful insights were shared by the resource people: Hope Daugherty of the Department of Agriculture (4-H), Julie Gilligan of Girl Scouts of the USA, Bradley Greenberg of Michigan State University, Trish Gorman of the American Federation for Teachers, Ben Logan of the Media Action Research Center, Elliot Medrich of the University of California at Berkeley, Oliver Moles of the National Institute of Education, Jerome Singer of Yale University, Ellen Wartella of the University of Illinois, and Tannis Williams of the University of British Columbia.

Special appreciation needs to be expressed to the eight organizations who cosponsored the workshop with the U.S. Office of Education: American Association of School Administrators, American Federaton of Teachers, Girl Scouts of the USA, National Association of Elementary School Principals, National Association of State Boards of Education, National PTA, National School Boards Association, and the Television Information Office of the National Association of Broadcasters.

The support of the project monitor, Frank Withrow of the U.S. Office of Educaton was instrumental in the success of the workshop. Finally, the dedicated SEDL staff made it all work: Bonnie Greenberg, Mike Pareya, Lois Pesz, Diana Scarbrough, Sherry Stanford, and Jo Ann Star.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. OVERVIEW 1

II. PRESENTATIONS OF WORKSHOP STIMULATORS 2

"The Need for Awareness"
by George Comstock 3

"The Need for Cooperative Effort"
by Patrick L. Daly 10

"Building a Foundation for Cooperation"
by Thomas Bolger 17

"The Need for Involvement"
by Virginia Sparling 23

"The Need for Commitment"
by Abbott Washburn 31

III. POSITION PAPERS 36

From the perspective of...Critical TV Viewing Curriculum Projects

"Critical Television Viewing: A Public Television Station Reaches Out"
by Debbi Wasserman Bilowit 37

"Critical Television Viewing for Elementary Students"
by Charles Corder-Bolz and Lois Pesz 43

"Positive Uses of Television in the Classroom"
by Linda M. Kahn and Thomas Rosenbluth 50

"Television and Youth: The Importance of Critical Viewing Skills"
by Donna Lloyd-Kolkin 56

"Viewer Education: It's Just Beginning"
by Ben T. Logan 59

From the perspective of...Educators

"Television and Teachers: A New Alliance"
by Linda Chavez and Trish Gorman 68

"Television's Role in the Learning Process: Considerations for School Leaders"
by Robert L. Olcott and David Jonassen 70

From the perspective of...Related Government Agencies

"The Family and Television: An Overview of Federal Programs"
by Carter Collins and Oliver Moles 76

"Critical Television Viewing Skills"
by Frank B. Withrow 83

From the perspective of...Representatives of the TV Industry

"What the TV Industry is Doing to Help Youth"
by Jack Blessington 88

"Children, Education, and Television"
by Grace Cavalieri 94

"Seven Things People Want to Know About Children's Television"
by Roy Danish 99

"What Public Broadcasting is Doing to Help Children and Youth"
by Peter J. Dirr 106

"Television, Teaching and the Schools"
by Saul Rockman 113

"ABC Community Relations"
by Pamela N. Warford 118

From the perspective of...Researchers

"Theoretical Bases for Receivership or Critical Viewing Skills Curricula"
by James A. Anderson 123

"Social Knowledge, Children's Processing, and Social and Educational Implications of Viewing TV Dramas"
by W. Andrew Collins 129

"TV and Academic Achievement: Structuring the Visual Dimension"
by Francis M. Dwyer 138

"Learning from Television: What are the Limits?"
by David Jonassen 143

"Students' Understanding of Television: Getting to the Child's Frame of Reference"
by Timothy P. Meyer and Anne Hexamer 153

"Research Hatfields and Industry McCoys: Stepping Through a Dialogue"
by Eric Michaels 159

"A Before-And-After Study of the Effects of Television"
by Tannis McBeth Williams 166

From the perspective of...Youth-Serving/Child-Advocate Groups

"Beyond 1984"
by Action for Children's Television (ACT) 176

"Position Paper on 4-H and Television"
by Hope S. Daugherty 181

"The Needs of Youth in the Age of Television"
by Julie Gilligan 182

"Children and Advertising: What is Industry Doing to Regulate Its Child-Directed Advertising?"
by Kathleen S. McGowan 187

"Television from the Perspective of a Youth-Serving Organization"
by David F. Wynn 190

IV. RESULTS OF SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS 193

Youth Leaders Group 194
Parent Leaders Group 195
Educators Group 197
Television Professionals Group 198

V. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK FORCES 199

Task Force One 200
Task Force Two 201
Task Force Three 202
Task Force Four 203

VI. CONCLUSIONS 204

APPENDIX

List of Participants

I. OVERVIEW

OVERVIEW

The National Workshop on Television and Youth was held in Washington, D.C. on March 12 and 13, 1980. The workshop, sponsored by the U.S. Office of Education, was also co-sponsored by the American Association of School Administrators, American Federation of Teachers, Girl Scouts of the USA, National Association of elementary School Principals, National Association of State Boards of Education, National Congress of Parents and Teachers, National School Boards Association, and the Television Information Office of the National Association of Broadcasters and organized by the Southwest Educational Development Lab. National leaders from the television industry, youth-serving organizations, parent groups, education, federal agencies, and the research community attended.

The purposes of the workshop were (1) to develop dialogue within and between the several sectors of our society whose interests and expertise are focused upon the role of television in the lives of children and youth; (2) to increase awareness of the need for making the television viewing experience of chldren and youth positive, beneficial, and educational; (3) to encourage and assist the development of programmatic efforts within organizations; and (4) to identify and develop the foundations for collaborative efforts among organizations.

The Workshop was a work-oriented meeting. Each participant was a member of a Special Interest Group and a member of a Task Force. Four Special Interest Groups (Educators, Youth Leaders, Parent Leaders, and TV Industry) were composed of representatives from their particular sector, plus resource persons from the federal agencies and the research community. Each Special Interest Group had the assignment of developing recommendations which could be taken back to the representatives' organizations and which could be shared with similar organizations. Four Task Forces were then formed with equal representation of parent leaders, educators, youth leaders, and industry professionals. Each Task Force had the assignment of developing recommendations for collaborative efforts to assist the TV industry, educators, parent leaders, and youth leaders.

During meals and at the beginning of each of the two days, participants heard presentations by George Comstock, professor at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communication at Syracuse University; Patrick Daly, high-school teacher in Dearborn, Michigan, and national vice president for the American Federation of Teachers; Thomas Bolger, president of WMTV-TV in Madison, Wisconsin, and chairman of the board of the National Association of Broadcasters; Virginia Sparling, president of the National PTA; and Abbott Washburn, member of the Federal Communications Commission.

Despite the lack of precedence for a working meeting of this scope, there was a remarkable commitment to find a common ground upon which all participants could build. The Workshop was an opportunity to begin developing cooperative efforts and was not expected to find final solutions. By the end of the Workshop, the desired and hoped-for results clearly emerged. Through all the existing problems and misunderstandings, the overwhelming consensus was a desire to carry on the initiatives established during the two days. Other and more ambitious meetings and programs were suggested. The greatest concern was that the beginnings of productive dialogues must not be lost.

II. PRESENTATIONS OF WORKSHOP STIMULATORS

THE NEED FOR AWARENESS

An invited keynote address to the
National Workshop on Television & Youth
March 12-13, 1980

by

George Comstock
S.I. Newhouse Professor
Syracuse University

This is a highly propitious moment for an assessment of television's contribution to what and how children learn. Three events, each distinct and separate, are converging to place the topic of children and television more prominently on the public agenda.

First, there is currently underway a retrospective on the scientific progress in understanding the role of television in the lives of children since the report of the Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior in 1972, Television and Growing Up: The Impact of Television Violence. The National Institute of Mental Health plans to release this comprehensive statement--The Surgeon General's Report: A Decade Later, perhaps--in 1981. As did the original report, it will cover a broad range of topics, including the impact of television on behavior and thought, use of time, learning, and relationships within the family. Again, violence in entertainment will be only one of the topics covered.

Second, the Federal Trade Commission, after a decade of urging by Action for Children's Television, the Council on Children, Media and Merchandising, and other advocacy groups, has been examining evidence on the influence on children and parents of advertising accompanying children's weekend and weekday programming. Specifically, the Commission is considering a ban or restrictions on advertising when very young children are predominant in the audience, and a ban or restrictions on the advertising of sugar-coated foods when children under 12 years of age are predominant in the audience. The arguments on behalf of regulatory steps against the advertising accompanying children's programming is (1) that such commercials may be unfair or deceptive because children do not comprehend the mercenary intent of advertisers, (2) the foods advertised may be nutritionally suspect, and (3) nurturing consumer desires in children may make parenting unacceptably difficult. Those who oppose regulatory intervention hold that no harm traceable to exposure to commercials can be demonstrated.

Third, the Federal Communications Commission is entertaining the possibility of requiring seven-and-a-half hours per week of educational and cultural programming for children--five hours for very young children, and two-and-a-half hours for older children. In considering such a rulemaking, the Commission is reacting to a conviction on the part of its staff that broadcasters have not complied with its 1974 policy statement calling for more and better programming for children during the week. As the result of this step, controversy has arisen over the proper measure of broadcaster performance in regard to children, the appropriate definition of cultural and educational programming, and the extent of the Commission's authority to mandate one or another type of programming.

As a backdrop to these three events, there are three decades of social and behavioral science research devoted to children and television. Some of it is worthless. Much of it is redundant. But nevertheless, a body of knowledge has emerged that makes it clear that television commands our attention when we think about children. This research can be placed in the context of political events and public concern in terms of four periods.

The first can be characterized as a period of growing public attention to the issue of the effects of television on children. It began in the early 1950's when television reached only about one-fourth of American homes--10 million--and the typical set was a fourteen-inch, black-and-white. The very first congressional hearing devoted to television programming was held in 1952 by the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce. The topic was violence and sexual provocativeness in entertainment and their possibly detrimental effects on young viewers. The same themes, only before much more prominent forums, occupied Congress again and again for the next seventeen years. Senators Estes Kefauver and Thomas Dodd chaired a series of highly publicized Senate hearings into the possible contribution of violent television entertainment to juvenile delinquency and crime. The pattern throughout these hearings has continued to the present. The atmosphere was one of hostility between defensive broadcasters and critical congressmen. At the same time there was, as there is today, considerable ambiguity over the powers of Congress or any other federal entity to influence or take any action affecting the content of broadcast entertainment. What the hearings unambiguously constituted was a symbol of public concern over the influence of television; and one legacy of this concern was the acceptance by many of the monitoring of television violence as one measure of broadcaster performance in the "public interest, convenience, and necessity."

The next period, from 1968 through 1971, can be characterized as one of intensive scrutiny. The staff of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence published a comprehensive review of the research in 1969 on the prevalence and influence of violence in television, newspapers, and films. The Commission itself declared in its report, Mass Media and Violence, that violence in entertainment was a cause for concern. These events were immediately followed by a request from Senator John Pastore for a conclusive scientific examination of the effects of television violence, which led to the Surgeon General's inquiry. The result was the publication of the report of the Surgeon General's scientific advisory committee in 1972, accompanied by five volumes of new and varied research on television and children.

The staff report of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence constituted a state-of-the-art survey of existing evidence. The report of the Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior added important new evidence from new research. Neither had much immediate impact, but their long-range effects have been significant.

This period of intensive scrutiny began with violence in entertainment and its effects on children as the principal concern. Before the Surgeon General's inquiry, there were about 50 experiments published in prestigious scientific journals which demonstrated that exposure to a violent portrayal increased the aggressive behavior of children and adolescents immediately subsequent to exposure. The question that remained unanswered was whether these findings of influence in the setting of a laboratory-type experiment were generalizable to everyday life. What the Surgeon General's study added was evidence from a series of surveys that the regular viewing of violent television drama was positively associated with a higher degree of interpersonal aggressiveness. Further, it left the exposure to television violence as a quite plausible contributor to this heightened aggressiveness by eliminating several alternative explanations for the documented association. The data indicated that the association was not attributable to the greater aggressiveness of frustrated adolescents faring poorly in school who also watched a great deal of television. Nor was it attributable to the presence in the sample of adolescents from families of lower socioeconomic status--where television viewing is greater and norms on aggressiveness more permissive. The relationship between violence viewing and aggressiveness remained when sex, socioeconomic status, and school achievement were taken into account. Thus, the combined evidence from the laboratory-type experiments, which demonstrated the possibility of a real-life causal influence, and from the surveys, which documented the association that would be consistent with a causal influence, supports the conclusion that television was influencing the behavior of children. Put simply, the evidence supported the view that children were learning how to behave from television.

The third period, 1972 through 1974, can be described as one of apathy and controversy--apathy on the part of the public, and controversy within the scientific and broadcasting communities. The public apathy was explained by the rather technical language employed by the commission staff report, the Surgeon General's committee, and the researchers themselves, which not only effectively shielded the public from the import of the data, but left the press confused. The New York Times reversed the conclusion of the committee that the experimental and survey evidence converged in favor of causality in its initial front page coverage. Other media followed suit. Two journalism professors at the University of Texas examined the press coverage and found some newspapers reporting that violence viewing stimulated aggressiveness, some that it inhibited it, and others that everything--as was obvious from the beginning--depended to a great extent on the child, the family, and the circumstances. As a result, the next three years passed with public indifference--a tribute to the power of the press.

The controversy centered on the composition of the Surgeon General's committee, which included several persons closely associated with the television business, and the role of that composition in the opacity of the language employed in its report. It also centered on the validity of the scheme for monitoring television violence developed by George Gerbner and his colleagues at the University of Pennsylvania, an annual endeavor now approaching the status of an institution that was first financially supported by the violence commission and the Surgeon General's inquiry.

Douglass Cater and Stephen Strickland in Television Violence and the Child concluded that the Surgeon General's inquiry had no impact. They published their book in 1975, and they wrote too soon and looked too narrowly. They overlooked the large impact of the inquiry on knowledge about children and television, and they missed what was on the horizon.

The final period began in 1975 and extends to the present. The best descriptive term is confrontation. The three years that had passed since the issuance of the report of the Surgeon General's advisory committee had been long enough for corrective press coverage--in the New York Times, Newsweek, U.S. News and World Report, and elsewhere--to enter public thinking, and this process of public consciousness-raising was enhanced by prominent Senate hearings held by Pastore in 1972 and 1974.

The issues of sex and violence now became entangled with general congressional dissatisfaction with the FCC, and Congress instructed the agency to act effectively in this sphere or face budgetary retribution. Richard Wiley, then chairman of the commission, gained the accord of the three networks and the National Association of Broadcasters to adopt the family viewing code that prohibited entertainment suspect from the perspective of suitability for viewing by all members of a family between the hours of 7 and 9 p.m. This policy achieved national attention, and at least in terms of name and principle, gained the support of the public. Shortly thereafter, the National Congress of Parents and Teachers and the American Medical Association entered into campaigns to reduce the violence in television entertainment. Family viewing, as official policy, met its demise within a year as the result of a ruling by Federal Judge Warren Ferguson in Los Angeles that both the nature and means of this particular social innovation violated the First Amendment. The issue since then has been remanded by an appeals court to the FCC for possible future action.

Nevertheless, what the family viewing code and the campaigns against television violence expressed was a deep dissatisfaction with the quality of television entertainment reaching children. It is that dissatisfaction that we see expressed in the current FTC and FCC inquiries, and it is a dissatisfaction that will certainly draw strength from the forthcoming retrospective on the Surgeon General's inquiry--not because its report will be an indictment of television, but because it will certainly further the belief that television plays an important part in the way children grow up.

The controversy has also spread far beyond television violence. It has come to include the legitimacy of directing advertising at children, the value of the role models television offers to children, and the penalties that the time children spend with television may extract through the diminution of play, interaction with others, reading, study, and introspection. One legacy of the Surgeon General's inquiry is the research on the influence of television advertising on children that has figured prominently in the FTC hearings. Before the publication of a scholarly treatment of this topic as part of this inquiry, such research was almost wholly proprietary and directed to serving the interests of manufacturers. Now, there is a growing body of disinterested social and behavioral science evidence on this issue. Much the same can be said about other spheres of inquiry. This is what Cater and Strickland missed in confining their assessment of the impact of the Surgeon General's study to television violence. What the Surgeon General's study did was establish a sizable, fresh body of data that has served as a foundation for research in a number of new directions. By giving enhanced credence to the view that some kinds of television entertainment may have detrimental influences on the behavior of children, it also suggested that programming that is carefully designed to encourage positive and constructive behavior can have a beneficent effect. Thus, the major contribution of the Surgeon

General's inquiry is to enhance, by empiricism, the moral obligation of broadcasters.

This moral obligation also can find guidance for its expression from the social and behavioral sciences. Violent portrayals, it appears, can have rather wide effects by stimulating all sorts of aggressive behavior--but portrayals of positive and constructive behavior are more sharply limited to influencing behavior closely akin to precisely what has been televised. The evidence supports the skepticism of W.C. Fields: "children can always find some mischief." What this implies for broadcasters is that they must take particular care with violence, and they must search assiduously for the positive and constructive kinds of behavior that in fact fall realistically within the scope of children's daily activity, if in fact their programs are to have a beneficent effect.

Looking back over the past three decades of controversy and scientific inquiry, much has changed. The supposition that violence in television entertainment might adversely affect children has been replaced by empirical evidence strongly supportive of the view that it increases aggressive behavior. This evidence, in turn, has helped to widen the range of portrayals over which there is concern because it supports the belief that children do learn from television entertainment. It has given strength to that very early suspicion of many that television is the school in the home.

Historically, sociologists and political scientists have not been much concerned with the mass media in connection with children because before television, children did not spend so much time with the mass media. Now, the average child under 12 years of age views more than 27 hours per week during the fall and winter. Now children not only are more involved in what the mass media convey by entertainment but also are more often exposed to the news of the day. What was once largely or exclusively the province of adults has, through television, been introduced into the world of the child.

Television is largely entertainment, but much of that entertainment deals with public issues--honesty in elected office, criminal justice, the behavior of doctors and lawyers, and other questions that are subject to intervention by law, reform, and advocacy. Television news, on the other hand, brings a perspective unfamiliar to the child of the past. Unlike the schools, which emphasize the symbols of consensus--the office of the Presidency, the three branches of government, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, limits of power, the responsibilities of officials, the thrust westward, the Monroe Doctrine, and the great World Wars--and perhaps do so to the detriment of a realistic education, television emphasizes the symbols of dissension. The schools emphasize those things which unite the society. The news concentrates on the signs of rupture and conflict. Except at certain recognized times, such as the Bicentennial and the Presidental inauguration, the news focuses on the strains and stresses in society. Thus, television has introduced a new factor through both its entertainment and news, in the way children are prepared to become citizens. Its influence in this sphere is almost certainly growing, because the traditional strength of the family in shaping political opinion is becoming more uncertain and problematical as voters increasingly desert party allegiances and politics become more volatile and unpredictable.

Over these same three decades, there has been a significant shift from acceptance of the mass media to a more skeptical and critical stance. The media, of course, have always been subject to criticism, particularly in regard to their influence on children and public morality. The history of the movies and the campaign against violent comic books are two examples preceding the television age. However, there has been a subtle but important change that holds both promise and danger. That is a shift among the better educated, the well-informed, among those whom political scientists and sociologists think of as elites, from thinking of the media as needing protection from a public indifferent to the First Amendment toward thinking of the public as needing some protection from the media. The danger, of course, is that the First Amendment may be subtly weakened. The promise is that the media, in self-protection, may actually serve the public better.

The axiom that the proper question is not, "what does television do to children?" but, "what do children do with television?" is true enough. But the proposition that the influence of the medium is contingent on the characteristics and reactions of each individual child should not be allowed to obscure the major issue in evaluating the performance of the broadcasting business--the quality and character of the television with which children made do.

There are certainly valid, documented reasons for taking an interest in the role of television in the lives of our children. Since the first test pattern appeared on a screen, folk wisdom has held that audiences would turn away when the novelty wore off. Such prophecies have failed. For the past three decades, television has consumed progressively more and more hours in the average home. One consequence is the mass media have come to assume a much larger place in everyone's life. Another consequence is that a wide variety of other activities, such as conversation and social interaction, have become slightly attenuated.

There is also justification for interest in the demonstrated fact that the influence of television on children is sensitive to intervention by parents and teachers. Two examples tell the story. If a violent portrayal is criticized by an authoritative figure, the degree to which an experimental subject subsequently will display aggressiveness is sharply reduced. During the Vietnam war, children and adolescents received most of their information about the war from television, and not from schools or parents, but their partisanship in opposing or favoring the war followed the partisanship of their parents. The implication is unambiguous. Television may teach, but the outcome of that teaching is subject to the views and opinions expressed by parents and teachers. Much of the power of television depends on an unnecessary vacuum that adults create by omission.

The so-called new technology also dictates interest and concern. These varied devices--cable television, pay-TV, video discs and cassettes, in-home recording and playback, and satellite transmission--in the abstract promise a great diversity of television programming, with far more programming being available for children. In the abstract, they also promise television for specialized and smaller audiences than those from which broadcasters now reap their rewards. Yet, there are two unanswered questions. The first concerns who will pay and how will universal access for children be achieved. Access to these devices are contingent on family affluence, and what the new technology may bring is two video cultures--one, barren and stripped, for the children of the poor, and another, rich and varied, for the children of the rich. The second concerns how the ostensibly superior programming will be financed. Television is an expensive business, and the fractioning of the audience simply may not result in enough viewers to make new and different programming profitable. Thus, the new technology may come to mean only more of the same--if the new technology draws enough viewers away from broadcast television to reduce the investment that broadcasters now make in new programming. Television not only commands our attention for what we have seen of it, but for the unknown that we will discover in the future.

THE NEED FOR COOPERATIVE EFFORT

An invited keynote address to the
National Workshop on Television & Youth

by

Patrick L. Daly
Vice President, American Federation of Teachers

Good morning. Ever since receiving this assignment, my pleasure in viewing television has greatly diminished. I used to watch M-A-S-H and BARNEY MILLER with a kind of simpleminded pleasure. Now, I am very conscious of my viewing habits, and I have worked at developing my viewing skills. I see now that "Hot Lips" is not just a big, good looking girl with a warm heart. It is clear that she is a victim of "Hawkeye's" chauvinistic remarks. The experience, however, has been good for me. It has forced me to think about some things I simply haven't had time to think about as a classroom teacher. This morning, I would like to touch quite briefly on some of the things that I have had to think about in the past few weeks. Specifically, I would like to make a few remarks about how I think some of the burgeoning technological developments in the television industry are going to impact education and what new cooperation efforts now may be needed. I also would like to make a few suggestions on how I think some of the distance separating the world of the television industry and education can be bridged. And finally, I would like to say a word or two about some problems that I think will face us in the very near future.

In the teacher's lounge of the high school in which I teach, there is a TV set. Although it is a somewhat old, black and white model, it is in perfect working order. It has been in the lounge for twelve or thirteen years, and it is situated in a corner of the room apart from the main work area. There are comfortable chairs and couches and even a rug on the floor. In short, there is every inducement for teachers to spend part of their lunch period or their preparation hour watching TV. During the years the set has been there it has, as far as I can determine, been turned on twice. Once, to catch a critical 1968 World Series game that the Detroit Tigers won, and a second time for the funeral services for Hubert Humphrey--a former member of my union and a man for whom many teachers had a particular affection. I think that the role usually played by television in most high school classrooms is analogous to the TV set in that lounge--something nice to have around, something potentially useful--but something essentially irrelevant to what goes on in the classroom. There are, of course, perfectly understandable reasons why teachers don't watch TV in the lounge. They have more important things to do. For one, they would prefer to talk to their colleagues during their half hour lunch break and during the hour they have for preparation of classes. But even if a teacher decided to use a TV set in the classroom, it would be impossible to do so, because--aside from the set in the teacher's lounge--there is no other set in the building! There are in the building, however, 20 movie projectors, a great array of phonographs, tape recorders, cassette recorders, DuKane projectors, and, at last count, seven computer terminals. It is not that there hasn't been a TV set available because the district can't afford it or because requests for one have been denied, and it certainly hasn't been because the teachers I work with are lacking in innovative ideas or creativity. We haven't had a set available for classroom use simply because no one felt any particular need to have one.

Daytime commercial TV is, for the most part, irrelevant to the needs of secondary teachers. The daytime programming of children's shows, game shows, soap operas, interviews, etc., has only a marginal utility for a class in English, chemistry, accounting, etc. The fertile field of high school use, of course, is the array of prime time programs. Until recently there have been seemingly insurmountably handicaps for secondary teachers seeking to capitalize on what TV has to offer. One might assign a program to be watched as homework, but it simply was not the same as a regular homework assignment. Homework is, hopefully, something that students go off and complete by themselves with a minimum of interference by other family members. A TV assignment is something different.

In some households watching a TV program is something that has to be negotiated with other members of the family. In talking to my students, however, who might be described as very middle middle class, I find that in many households two TV sets is the norm, with many households having three or four sets. I found five out of 135 who said there were six functioning TV sets in their homes. Obviously, for these students, negotiating to watch a program is not usually a problem.

A major difficulty in assigning an evening TV show, however, is that there is a lapse between the time that the student watches the program and the time it is discussed in class. If a student has read a novel, he has the novel right there in front of him to refer to as discussion takes place; but until very recently, this kind of immediate feedback has not been possible when utilizing TV programs.

Another difficulty in assigning TV shows has been the inflexibility of TV programming. The program that was scheduled for 8 p.m. had to be watched at exactly 8 p.m. Anyone who knows anything at all about high school students knows that they are a very mobile group--and the older they get, the more mobile they become. In an average high school senior class, I would estimate that close to 75 percent of seniors hold some kind of job which they have obtained either on their own or through a job placement program sponsored by the school. I realize very well that the situation is quite different in many inner city schools. If they get the opportunity, most older high school students want to work and do work. The Puritan work ethic is alive and well in high schools despite what you may have heard--at least in terms of work for pay. Work to broaden one's intellectual horizons still seems to encounter the usual resistance. The demands of a job, plus the mobility afforded by the ownership of cars, has made it unrealistic to assume that it is going to be possible to get 30 students in an English class to be someplace and be stationary for one hour on a particular night to watch a program. The fact that students spend decreasing amounts of time in their own homes as they move through the grades in high school has made the assignment of TV programs a frustrating experience for most teachers.

About three months ago a revolution was wheeled into my school. As you've guessed, it is a very sleek, multi-buttoned video cassette system complete with camera, receiver and all component parts. The arrival of video cassette system in the schools has changed everything. I think it is interesting that the particular system my school now possesses was not acquired at the demand of teachers but was a gift to the school from last year's graduating class. I think there is something significant in that. It is just possible that a generation so much a part of an electronic era perceives more quickly than the average adult the instructional possibilities inherent in this particular technological innovation. I think it is pretty easy to see how the disadvantages of the usual TV assignment now can be overcome.

Some weeks ago I asked the school's media center to set the equipment to videotape the President's State of the Union address. I don't know why, but there is something mysterious and just a little unreal about this machine turning itself on in the middle of the evening in a deserted room and recording a program with no human being present--something of an electronic crock pot. TV critics might think that is a more apt analogy than I really had intended. In the government class I teach I will be ready to study the institution of the presidency in about three weeks. In the past I have used printed copies of the State of the Union address to show how the President approaches the performance of this duty mandated by the Constitution. One doesn't realize just how dull a State of the Union message can be until it is read rather than heard. I've always been dissatisfied with this particular activity. One loses the impact, the drama that one hears and also sees on the TV screen--the President being announced by the doorkeeper of the House, the very political walk up the aisle to the podium with dozens of hands being thrust toward the President, the obvious presence of the Secret Service agents searching even that prestigious audience for any unusual activity. Finally, as the speech is being delivered, the TV eye enhances the drama and importance of the occasion by lingering on the Supreme Court justices in their robes, on the President's family, and then sweeps in closer to pick up the facial reactions of the President's friends and foes to what is being said. There is a vast difference between hearing and seeing the reactions of the President's fellow Democrats and reading the word "applause" on a written transcript. The whole visual excitement of the event is lost when one sits in class and reads a printed copy of a speech such as this.

Now, when I am ready to deal with this particular aspect of the course, I will bring in the video cassette and let students both hear and see the address. I can stop it at any point for analysis and discussion. The video cassette, in short, becomes a very effective teaching tool. I won't abandon the reading of the address. In combination with the taped address, it is an excellent means of showing students how the delivery of words and the setting in which they are delivered can heighten the impact and significance of what is being said. Also, it can show how that setting and delivery might mask a lack of content, and how style might triumph over substance. I think everyone can see how useful this single innovation can be to the science teacher who wants to make use of a NOVA program or an English teacher who can supplement the reading of Shakespeare with viewing a professional production of the play being studied. Now, the time of discussion can follow the viewing of the program immediately. The program, or a portion of it, can be used when it is most appropriate. Particular portions of the program can be used for a period of days. It can even be used for a period of time, be set aside for weeks, and then be brought back into the class for whatever purpose the teacher sees fit. One now can guarantee that all the students in a particular class will see a program without interference from other members of their family, the student's job, or the 500 other things from rock concerts and sports to visits to the local pizzeria that distract a high school student. And if the student should be absent on the day when the video cassette is used in class, he can view it on his own at a convenient time in the school media center.

I decided to spend the past few moments going into some detail about how just one recent innovation can change what happens in school. One could spend a lot more time than we have today analyzing what is going to happen to American education once the full potential of cable television and satellites is realized. Educational journals, however, frequently carry articles about some innovation--particularly a new piece of hardware--that promises to revolutionize education. After the first propaganda blitz, most of these things either disappear, prove to be much too expensive for the average school, or simply lack the inservice training that would enable teachers to utilize the innovation. In many cases new equipment sits unused because it has broken down. Even though there is money enough to make the purchase of the equipment, there is little or nothing to repair and maintain it. I believe video cassettes and video discs and all the new technology and hardware that are slowly finding their way into schools has an enormous potential for changing what we will teach in the schools and how we will teach it. For years most teachers viewed television as something on the fringe of what we taught--something extra, something that supplemented, that added to what we did. Sometimes an unusual program like ROOTS or THE HOLOCAUST comes along; then many teachers use the programs as the core, the essential part of a teaching unit. In the future, however, it is going to become much more feasible to bring television in from the outer circle of what we do. The programs might now become the core of a particular teaching unit. Books, of course, are not about to be replaced. The availability of printed materials and the familiarity that both teachers and students feel with such material makes it inconceivable that print wouldn't continue to be the primary source of information in schools. New technology has simply widened the options available to us.

I would suggest, however, that there are three groups who must play a much more active role than they have thus far in helping teachers to fully utilize these new developments. One would be those who administer the process of education, the school boards, superintendents, principals and coordinators. Second, those who manufacture the equipment which we have been talking about. Third, is the federal government which is increasing the source of funding for utilizing TV in the schools.

Teachers are much like other people. Things which are new and rather technical can intimidate them. It is difficult to change old habits, old patterns. It isn't going to be enough to bring an expensive piece of equipment before a faculty, give them a half hour of instruction on how it might be used, and then wheel it back to the media center and wait for the flood of reservations that should follow. A few teachers on the staff will accept it as a challenge and run the risk of falling flat on their faces as they experiment with it. Do you know what it is like to fiddle around ineptly with a piece of electronic gear before a class of 17-year-olds whose bedrooms resemble the testing laboratories at RCA?

Many more teachers will be filled with well meant resolves to try it out than will actually use what is now available, but which is new and unfamiliar. If the introduction of this new technology into the schools is not accompanied by well thought out inservice programs that clearly demonstrate how and where the equipment might be used, the school system is wasting its money. If the manufacturers of the equipment refuse to take an active role and to make an investment in promoting and contributing to this inservice training, then it seems to me that they will be very shortsighted in limiting the market for the product they manufacture. Finally, I believe the federal government must continue to fund research, development and the training of teachers in the application of new communication technology in the classroom. I think a cooperative effort between the groups I've mentioned and one that would involve teacher organizations could result in improvement in education, profit for manufacturers, and represent a positive contribution to the public good.

The emphasis I've placed on these new developments in television does not mean that I regard this as the sole arena for cooperation between educators and other groups concerned with the impact of television upon children. Holding a central spot among these groups are the networks; and something must be said about our relations with them in particular. I think some of the causes of misunderstanding and antagonism that have marred relations between educator groups and others and the industry are rooted in our insistence that the commercial TV industry be something that it probably never can be, and the TV industry's misunderstanding of the role that organizations such as the PTA, the National School Boards Association and the AFT must play in society. We all know that TV networks exist to make money, and to produce profits for their shareholders; for that, they owe apologies to no one. In our pragmatic way we have created a mixed economic system within which television services are going to be delivered through both the public and private sectors. We know also that the need to make profits constantly affects the choice of content in TV programs and the treatment of that content. For many of us (exempting this audience, of course) that is the extent of our knowledge about the economics of the television industry. I don't think that is enough. I believe that those of us who would hope to persuade the industry to improve the variety, content and availability of television offerings and those who hope to improve the viewing skills of young people must develop a much more sophisticated perception of the economic pressures that underlie decision making in the industry.

I don't want to be misunderstood. I do not think this is a situation where to know all is to forgive all. I am not promoting the idea that to better understand the economic dynamics of the television industry is to forgive them their excesses. I'm convinced that we give very little credence to critics who we feel have little basic understanding of how our businesses, professions, or organizations operate. Every union knows that to bargain effectively, one must know as much or more about the organization on the other side of the table as one knows about one's own operation. I think it is imperative for organizations like mine and like yours to do everything possible to educate our members on how and why the television industry operates as it does--to understand as thoroughly as one can the economic forces that shape the industry. In turn I think the industry must do a better job than it has in the past to understand that our organizations must play the role of critics if we are to carry out the purposes for which we were created. For the PTA or the Girl Scouts or the AASA not to serve as critical watchdogs would be to fail to carry out the public service they were meant to provide. For an organization interested in the educational uses of television not to function as helpful critics can only mean one of two things. Either the organization finds nothing to criticize or it has been effectively co-opted by the industry it should be monitoring.

How each of our organizations can best educate its members is something for each organization to decide. Very quickly, however, I would like to suggest one method for promoting the kind of realistic dialogue that has to be the basis for any cooperative effort between the world of television and the schools in particular. I have been interviewed a few times on TV. I have served on one or two television panels and been in the audience for one or two more and have had a few brief moments of glory in an occasional "man-on-the-street" interview when one of our locals has held a demonstration or been on strike. I would guess that that constitutes 95 percent more exposure to what goes on in the workaday world of television than the average teacher ever has. To most teachers knowledge about television largely comes from being part of the viewing audience. If I knew more about how the programs my students and I are watching were created and what kinds of technical, aesthetic and economic decisions had to be made to deliver that program, I would be a much better teacher.

For a long time I have had the idea that the television networks, in cooperation with their affiliate stations, should help sponsor a series of one-day workshops for teachers to help them develop the kind of insights into the industry that most of us do not presently have. The purpose of these workshops would be very simple, and it could be twofold. One goal would be to educate teachers on the technical side of TV production. I rarely have felt more like a klutz than while being prepped in the TV studio for a TV interview show. You are told to look here and not there, place your hands this way and not that way, turn aside, smile, keep your eye on the guy who will signal that you have ten seconds to summarize all your major points on the fiscal crisis in America's urban schools, and be careful not to knock off the little gizmo that they have clipped to your tie. And of course the last admonition you hear before the cameras roll is, "just look natural and relax." So one sits there like a docile booby because this is someone else's turf, and "they" are the experts. No one really objects to what I've described, since it is all part of trying to get a job done. But I have always had the desire to yell, "Stop!" and then go around and ask people, "what is that that you're doing?" and "why are you doing that?" I think other teachers are just as curious as I am about how TV gets put together.

After a morning spent showing a group of teachers how local programs are produced and exploring how other people do their jobs, I would take them all out to lunch. For those of you who do not teach, take my word for it, eating lunch out on a school day--removed from the sight and distinctive aromas of a school building--is a gala occasion. For all its rewards, teaching is a very confining profession. One has very few options for lunch. It's either the salisbury steak in the cafeteria or a brown bag in the teacher's lounge. Of course, the cafeteria also offers the dietician's latest creation--two peanut butter cookies covered with marshmallow whip and topped with raspberry jello. It will be lime jello next week for St. Patrick's Day. In the afternoon I would bring the group back to discuss with management some of the concerns that teachers have about what our children watch--not a confrontation or a gripe session, but an attempt at an honest dialogue. I assume that the kind of sessions I'm proposing have been done in a number of places, but I doubt that it has been done very extensively. How much would all this cost? Very little. It would include the cost of a substitute for the teacher (about $35 per teacher), the time of the station personnel involved, and that lunch.

My organization learned a long time ago that when a job had to be done which was too big for our group alone, common sense dictated that we join forces with other groups of like mind to achieve common goals--in short, to form a coalition. We believe in coalitions as an operating principle. In the past few years we have made common cause with a number of groups represented here today on a variety of issues, and the experience has been a rewarding one for us. My union and the National School Boards Association hold somewhat different views on a number of significant issues, but it would be foolish for us not to join with them when the funding for Title I programs is threatened, or not to join with the PTA (as we did) to oppose a tuition tax credit proposal. I think we are entering a period when coalition building will be increasingly important. Everyone here is well aware of the financial difficulties that now face cities and educational institutions. The shortage of funds in many areas of education has reached crisis proportions, and in our large cities, in particular, the crisis is almost a chronic condition. As belts get tighter, we are increasingly going to hear demands that we cut out the frills--whatever those may be. And frills to many people are the kinds of programs related to television and education that are under discussion at this conference. It may seem obvious to you or me that a medium that influences every facet of our lives--our politics, our economy, our habits and our family life--and affects these things with increasing intensity, demands our fullest attention. Helping students to learn from and to cope with the audiovisual images that receive so much of their attention may seem like a self-evident priority to this audience perhaps; but it certainly isn't one to many of the legislators and other decision makers who control the funding for the programs we promote. I believe that the contacts that have already been made among us must be strengthened, and that stronger coalitions must be formed if what we have accomplished thus far is to be preserved and if television is to achieve the potential that we believe it has--to further enrich our lives and those of our children. My organization, the American Federation of Teachers, is eager to join all of you in achieving that goal. I would like to thank the SEDL for its kind invitation and you for your attention. Thank you.

BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR COOPERATION

An invited keynote address to the
National Workshop on Television & Youth
March 12-13, 1980

by

Thomas E. Bolger
Chairman, National Association of Broadcasters

In the recent past we have become so embroiled in the criticism of television that in some respects we have forgotten its tremendous advantages--the rhetoric has obscured the realities.

Today's television, like any medium, is not all good. Just as with movies, books, and radio stations, not everything on TV can be justified as enlightening or informative. However, by watching television a child can still gain a considerable amount of knowledge and perceptions of values.

Television conveys to a child the inner world of human experience on a daily basis, exploring emotions and feelings, like love, anger, and grief; and values, like honesty and respect for others. Watching with our children allows us, as parents or teachers, to explore these feelings with them in a non-threatening way by using television as a starting point to discuss our own experiences and values.

Television has an important advantage over other media--the visual, entertaining style it uses to present ideas and information can entice a child to watch. Where he might not be motivated to pick up a textbook, he may be drawn to watch a television program that can provide equivalent information or increase his curiosity to learn about the subject.

Television can certainly be improved. Yet we should not allow criticism of its weak points to cause us to lose sight of the broad spectrum of knowledge it is capable of bringing into our homes today. It is our responsibility to grasp this opportunity and make it a positive experience for our children.

Indeed, that is the purpose of this conference...to explore ways in which we can improve television and education for those most important beneficiaries, our children.

Those of you who criticize television for not being an educational medium are dreamers rather than realists. Television is a simultaneous national entertainment, information and news medium. And I underline the word "entertainment." The American people are television's collective program director, and television programming reflects their wishes and tastes. Television is not--and I hope never will be--a self-conscious educational instrument. To me that implies an elite doing the "educating" of the great American unwashed. There are plenty of television systems in the totalitarian world which are that and only that. I believe, despite the criticisms I hear, that the American people love their television and certainly the boxcar figures for audiences night after night after night demonstrate its dominance in American society.

But what about children? In this group, I suspect, there are people wringing their hands because children no longer seem to be motivated. Their attention spans are too short. They are no longer disciplined. They are no longer willing to work hard. They are too distracted by frivolous activities.

To these people the principle arch criminal is television. We are told that in television we have great opportunities which we squander. Television could be a wonderful teaching tool, if only we would do the job that many teachers and parents can't seem to do for themselves.

To these people I would say, television is not compulsory, nor will it ever be. Television will teach only if it is interesting, stimulating and fun. Dry lectures, rote lessons, talking heads, unimaginative and ponderous presentations are going to teach few children anything. The audience for that kind of TV will be confined only to those children whose parents force them to watch. And, while parents may be able to force them to watch, they will never be able to force them to pay attention and learn. Television learning will occur only by taking the approach of CAPTAIN KANGAROO and SESAME STREET, in which learning becomes visual, lively, interesting and fun. Certainly the best and most successful teachers try to make their own teaching visual, lively, interesting and fun. Indeed, because so many of you have followed those precepts, television and its use have greatly improved in the last few years.

I think exciting opportunities for educating by television lie in the approach of using the programming that's on television every day. I can almost hear some of you mumbling, "What on earth can you teach with that stuff?" People who think that are failing to recognize an enormous opportunity--the fact that television viewing is one of the most important factors in children's lives.

Let's see how that's done. First take the easy ones: The news. Not only can students learn what is happening in their city and their nation and the world, but they learn something about who runs that city, the nation and the world. Who commits the crime and what society does about it. Local injustices are frequently pictured and they fire people up and give them a chance to talk about those injustices. And while you are doing it, you can talk about whether television was fair in its coverage and whether it gave emphasis to one subject over another and why.

Interview shows demonstrate to kids the variety of opinion on the very same subject. They have a chance to learn about politics, medicine, show business, religion and sports. And afterwards, the kids can talk about which people they agreed with and why, who made the best argument, and who presented weak or false arguments.

And I think I don't really have to present support for such things as 60 MINUTES, and drama shows based on famous books such as ROOTS, or classics such as ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT, or original dramas such as ELEANOR AND FRANKLIN, which can be used to teach many subjects: history, sociology, drama, etc.

Those are all obvious teaching vehicles. But there is another untouched, undiscovered load, sometimes called those terrible police shows. Capital Cities Communications developed a program in which students were assigned reading the scripts beforehand and watching POLICE WOMAN, THE ROCKFORD FILES, QUINCY, and similar shows. What could be greater homework assignments from the kids' point of view? You are assigned to watch a television show you are probably dying to watch anyway. So how does that teach you anything? Well, the next day students talk about such questions as: was the person really guilty, what was he charged with, did the police treat him fairly, should he be punished for what he did, why, and how much, what kind of punishment should be imposed, did the law work? Now what those imaginative teachers are really doing is teaching morality and ethics, probably some law and history, acting and directing, using the most denigrated shows on television. But, the real value is that children are motivated to read...because they want to.

A recent survey indicates that almost 50% of the teachers in this country occasionally assign the viewing of a television program as a homework assignment. To help in this effort, various broadcast organizations in addition to Capitol Cities are producing study guides for certain programs.

The Television Information Office, sponsored by broadcasters all over the nation, publishes a booklet called the "Teacher Guides to Television." Each issue concentrates on about a dozen upcoming programs on all three networks. The description of each program includes detailed suggestions for educational exercises and assignments based on the program. A feature on "The Miracle Worker," for example, might detail lessons on understanding the problems of handicapped people that can be used in the classroom after the children have viewed the program at home.

The television networks themselves also produce "Viewer's Guides" for programs they feel can be especially beneficial to children. The guides are available free of charge from station affiliates.

A nonprofit organization called Prime Time School Television produces teacher's guides on programs it feels are relevant and important. The guides provide suggested activities, questions for exploration, and resources for additional study.

Much like Capital Cities, CBS underwrites its own Television Reading Program in which students read scripts before the selected programs are aired, and their teachers use special guides to stimulate class discussion and activities based on the program content. A segment of THE WALTONS, for example, has been used as a springboard for lessons on Pearl Harbor and World War II. Again, because the television scripts seem especially interesting and relevant to many students, CBS feels the project is encouraging students to read more than they would otherwise. A survey of 262 teachers in eleven cities who had used the program indicated that all the teachers were interested in using it again.

The Parent Participation TV Workshop Project funded by NBC is another project that seems to hold special promise for valuable broadcaster and parent cooperation. These workshops have been spreading all across the nation since their inception a few years ago.

So, broadcasters can make a positive contribution to the development of children--through available programming, study guides, reading programs, and parent participation workshops. But television is not perfect. We have definite weaknesses and we can and should be doing an even better job than we are at present.

But, let me first explain. The competitive nature of the broadcast industry dictates that we strive for large audiences, which makes it very difficult for us to carry programs that will not achieve high ratings. Most programs that do not attract large audiences simply can not be broadcast on commercial TV, even if they are believed to be of high quality--and that is an unfortunate fact to have to face up to.

The sensitivity to ratings does not occur because commercial broadcasters are greedy or hard-hearted. The vast majority of us believe we are responsible individuals who act in the public interest. We are concerned adults like yourselves with children of our own. In addition to our concern for our children and our audiences, however, we must recognize and live within the basic economic realities of our medium.

Broadcasters, like other business people, have an obligation to our investors as well as to our audiences--so there is a limit to how often we can produce special-interest programming at a loss.

The fact that we can not broadcast a large amount of high-quality programming that appeals only to narrow audiences is just one of our problems. Another weakness we have is that too many of our children's programs are broadcast on Saturday mornings or the late afternoon--we need more in prime time, when 26% of the audience is composed of children under 12. I would suggest we establish a goal of broadcasting at least one high-quality program in early prime time each month that is designed specifically for children and with more than just entertainment in mind. NBC President Fred Silverman has already embarked on just such a program with the announcement of "Project Peacock." Starting in January, 1981, NBC plans to broadcast a children's special every other week in prime time.

I feel we have another fault as broadcasters. It is the promotion of negative stereotypes through our reliance on reruns of syndicated programs. Although new cartoons and children's programs are now carefully produced to show women and minorities in positive, important roles, the older programs in our inventory, like THE FLINTSTONES and MY THREE SONS, tend to ignore minorities and show women only in traditional stereotypical roles.

This is a difficult problem, because there is not enough new programming currently available to fill our broadcast days, and we have to rely to a certain extent on older programs. Many programs with objectionable stereotypes have been scrapped. However, it is my hope that we will make a greater effort to permanently retire programs with negative stereotypes as soon as a sufficient quantity of newer programs becomes available.

The promotion of television viewing is another area which needs reform. Some children spend too much time watching television, and we encourage them to do so. As broadcasters we try to persuade children to watch as many programs as possible because we want our audience levels to be high. But the time a child spends in front of the television set is time in which he is not interacting with other people, not reading, not engaging in physical exercise, and not engaging in creative or artistic play. In other words, many activities that are essential to a child's growth and development become progressively curtailed as the child spends more time in front of the set. Sensible limits, carefully explained and firmly enforced by parents, are needed by those children. Perhaps the broadcasters should be running the public service spots encouraging children to do other things than just watch TV, and demonstrating to them projects and activities they can engage in, or suggesting out-of-doors sports and games.

To conclude, I would like to recommend a few ways in which we can work together as broadcasters, parents, and educators united for the improvement of children's television...to build a foundation for cooperation.

In order to increase television's positive effects on children and decrease the negative effects, broadcasters, parents, and educators must work together. And we must start by recognizing each other's strengths and weaknesses and what we can and cannot achieve on our own. One of the best ways in which to open up such a dialogue is by doing exactly what we are doing now--meeting in workshops and conferences together to explore mutual needs and problems. The NAB conducts a national workshop on children's programming for stations, networks, program producers, educators, and viewer organizations every two years, in order to promote the development of high-quality children's programming. At our last conference we showed over 40 locally produced children's shows--from all sized markets across the country.

In addition to national conferences, it is probably even more important that workshops be held on the local level. Broadcasters, parents, and educators should form local organizations for the advancement and improvement of television for young people. These organizations could be called "television enrichment teams"; they could meet regularly to increase interaction between local broadcasters and the community. These teams could improve the use of the television in the classroom and could also be used to teach parents ways to improve their children's critical viewing skills.

The teams could also put out a bi-weekly local newsletter describing upcoming television programs of positive value to children. Local broadcasters might fund it, or parents could subscribe.

Broadcasters can also cooperate with educators through the funding of research into the effects of television on young people. Much of this is going on now, but more can be done. It is important to stress that this money should go toward productive research--some research that occurs now is too shallow to be of benefit and can, in fact, be destructive. For example, the research used as the basis for the recent FCC staff report on children's programming relied on five experts who were asked to decide the availability of children's programs entirely on the basis of the program's titles--not on any descriptions of the programs. There is no evidence that anyone actually watched the programs that were judged--yet it is upon this report that the FCC is basing its proposal for rules that would set a precedent for government intervention into television programming.

Research like this should, of course, be avoided--but that should not prevent us from going forward with better-constructed research projects.

Our children are the future of our society. You know that and we know that. None of us can afford to ignore their needs. We must closely examine the effect TV has on them and carefully assess whether our overall impact is positive or negative.

We broadcasters need to recognize our pervasiveness and power and do all we can to use them wisely. Tonight I gave you several examples of how we are doing this, from the production of better programming to the development of television study guides and parent participation workshops. I also gave you examples of areas in which we are still weak, including a lack of good children's programming in prime time, the use of programs with negative stereotypes and promotion of television viewing to the exclusion of other activities. To remedy some of these deficiencies, I set some goals for broadcasters including the scheduling of more children's programming in prime time, the gradual phasing out of programs with negative stereotypes and the promotion on our own air-time of alternative activities for children.

In return, I have asked that you recognize our limitations as a medium. Our reliance on advertising revenue as our sole source of funding forces us to emphasize mass-appeal programs that are marketable to advertisers. We want you to prod us continually and to help us recognize the areas in which we go wrong, but don't ask that we do the impossible. Your input is crucial but it should not--it cannot--be too unreasonable or it will go unheard.

We all need to recognize that we are not adversaries. We too often take an immediately defensive posture towards each other that prevents us from truly listening. Broadcasters, parents and educators are all in the business of communicating--but we often fail to communicate with each other.

Let us enter the eighties together--parents, teachers, and broadcasters united in the effort to make television as useful, educational, and informative as it can possibly be. With its great influence and presence in virtually every American home, television has tremendous power to influence society and improve the world in which we live. Rather than falling into the frustrations of an adversary relationship, let us use the next decade to cooperate fully for the public good.

We broadcasters pledge to listen to your concerns with close attention and serious interest, because the nature of our influence on future generations might have a role in determining the success or failure of society as a whole. As long as we truly listen to each other and keep the lines of communication open, I feel we will be able to move forward together. Our children are counting on us to enrich their present--and we are counting on them for our future.

THE NEED FOR INVOLVEMENT

An invited keynote address to the
National Workshop on Television & Youth
March 12-13, 1980

by

Virginia Sparling
President, National PTA

I would like to approach my time with you this morning from a different perspective. I would like to look at the past. I would like to look at the present. Then I would like, perhaps, to speculate on the future. Also, I would like to make this presentation in relationship to the necessity for building coalitions.

Many of the jobs we do, we cannot do alone. Getting the job done is often dependent upon those whom we can convince, obtain commitment, and from whom we subsequently obtain commitment and dedication to those things which we feel are right and just. And so I offer a perception of reality from three perspectives: the past, the present and the future.

Just for a few moments, please consider this situation--and I'm sure that many of you have done this before. You and your family are watching an action show on television in which one actor suffocates another with a pillow. When the show is finished, one of your youngsters takes a pillow from the living room sofa, walks over to the family dog, and presses the pillow over the dog's face. Now, the question is, what would you do?

Many times incidents such as the one I have just recounted really do happen. This particular one was related to the National PTA by a mother from a Chicago suburb whose foster child enacted this scene before the horrified eyes of the rest of the family. Even worse, the object of suffocation could have been a younger brother or a younger sister. In a very immediate way, this brief case history illustrates the fact that there can be a direct causal relationship between the violence that's seen on television and aggressive, hostile behavior by certain kinds of children. The National PTA, through its television project, wanted to find out if children are being victimized by constant exposure to the gratuitous violence on television; if they are being tempted to imitate what they see on television, and consequently are desensitized by the brutality which parades across our TV screens; are they also being made so numb that they find it hard to distinguish between reality and fantasy or to know that the victims of violence in real life do indeed suffer pain?

Because youngsters spend so much time watching television, more than they spend in class--and I'm not going to repeat the statistics that we all know very, very well, and have heard so many times--then what can be done about it? If you add to the number of hours of tremendous exposure to television the fact that by the time they reach a certain age they have witnessed many, many, murders, not including fights, robberies, kidnappings, and other kinds of violence, you can reach the conclusion that television's school of hard knocks provides not enrichment for children, but training in different kinds of warfare.

The National PTA did indeed want to learn why the tremendous power of television to educate was not being utilized for the benefit of children, but rather for their detriment. Why, instead of teaching positive social values, does television offer many detailed instructions in crime and other antisocial acts? All of these questions reflect our deep concern for children and for the environment in which they live and grow. And now we think that we have some of the answers.

Historically, the National PTA has been concerned about the effects of mass media on the young. But no medium of entertainment has ever been as persuasive or pervasive in nearly every home as has television. It's a part of our environment and of our lives, and it has the power to either pollute or enrich. This is why since 1968 the PTA has been focusing its attention on TV. Initially we were urging an improvement in the quality of TV programming, but finally we focused on something we felt that we could do something about--and that was gratuitous violence in prime time television. Repeated petitions to the industry and to the Federal Communications Commission for less violence and better programs have, in the past, fallen on deaf ears. Repeated resolutions were offered at our national conventions. These resolutions indicated a growing concern among our membership with what we perceived as the steadily worsening situation. Finally, it was at our national convention in 1975 that we received a mandate from our 6.5 million members via a resolution which demanded that the networks and local stations reduce the amount of violence shown on all programs--not just children's shows. At about the same time national opinion polls began to indicate the public's disenchantment with TV violence. This small voice had now grown to a 70 to 72 percent majority of those interviewed, boldly stating that we had had enough.

The National PTA's project on TV violence and its effects on children was obviously an idea whose time had come. It was launched in September of 1976, and it probably is the most comprehensive effort ever undertaken on this particular subject. The primary objectives of this program were to achieve a reduction in television violence and to put our attention to the reduction of other offensive programming. We wanted to affect an improvement in the overall quality and diversity of the shows, to focus national attention on the problems, and to do something about a resolution--carrying a very clear and forceful message to our four target groups: the television industry, advertisers who sponsor programs, the FCC, and the general public. We had in effect said that we have had enough television violence and poor quality programs. The National PTA with its 6.5 million members is determined to see the situation changed. We said further, that unless we did see a substantial and positive response from the industry, there would be a consideration of other forms of action, including development of an identification code for violent TV programs, challenge of license renewal of television stations, and even the consideration of boycotting those violent programs and their sponsors. Now, we are pleased to say, we have not had to take those other forms of action.

Communicating these beliefs to the public and getting feedback on the prevailing mood concerning TV violence occupied the PTA during the early months of 1977. In eight major cities across the country we conducted a series of marathon public hearings obtaining the personal testimonies of over 500 people from all walks of life: PTA members and non-members, professionals and lay persons, persons from the government, from the field of education, and many others. The testimonies were heard by a nine-member TV Commission. We wanted to take our case to the people because we believed that the testimony would substantiate what we felt to be true: that TV violence is harming children and that the public wants better programs minus the brutality. After 50,000 pages of testimony, we found consensus with us and some of the answers to questions referred to earlier. I'm going to mention briefly the major themes that emerged. And, again, I know that this audience has heard them in much more detail than I will give them to you today.

The first one that was confirmed was related to aggression. Many children become more aggressive in their behavior due to the influence of television violence--acting out the hostilities portrayed on television. Another theme is imitative behavior. Some young people will indeed be incited to commit violent acts in direct imitation of behavior seen on television. We know that not every child is going to do that, but there are children and young people who are ripe for that kind of suggestion. Desensitization is a concern--and we speak primarily of the youth, but we speak also about adults. There is a growing callousness and indifference to violence and the suffering it causes, due to the quantity and intensity of violence on television. Distortion is another problem. Perceptions by children and youth of real-life problem-solving methods are distorted. On television we see that violence is a sure and easy way to solve all problems. Rarely do we see nonviolent methods used. And lastly, continual exposure to murder, rape, arson, and assault does indeed diminish the quality of life for both children and adults.

A definition of the kind of TV violence that we are talking about also emerged. While some violent action may be necessary to story development and integral to the plot, it's a fact that much television violence is gratuitous in nature. As such, it is not crucial to the story line and is merely injected to provide vicarious thrills to viewers, to support a weak plot, or to hold viewers' attention until the next commercial. During the hearings held across the nation, representatives from the broadcasting industry--both network and local--continually challenged us on the results of the research done by the scientific community. What does anyone really know about television as a cause of violence or other antisocial behavior in the real world? But if you remember, Newsweek, February 21, 1977, noted that the overwhelming body of evidence drawn from more than 2,300 studies and reports is decidedly negative regarding the influence of television violence on children.

The National PTA is not a research group, and frankly we feel that the full relationship of television violence to increased aggression by children may never be completely ascertainable. But we have serious doubts about the wisdom and the risk of witholding judgment or action while we continue to find definitive data. Accordingly, the National PTA launched its first action plan which was the next step in the TV project. This began July 1, 1977 and continued to 1978. This initial action phase was a probationary period in which we tried to determine if there was some way to do something about the impact of television violence on prime time programming. During this time, PTA members across the nation were directly involved in an intensive training program and in activities to make this cause visible to the television industry, to advertisers, and to the public. At the base of all these activities was the National PTA Television Action Center from whence came the focus for this particular program. Certain activities of the Action Center were planned to involve people in each community, to bring to their attention the impact on our children and youth. There was a massive letter writing campaign. We supplied our members with names and addresses and told them how to write letters to local broadcasters. Another aspect was instruction to parents in monitoring techniques for the shows that were to be viewed by the children, and actual monitoring activities for that six-month period. Parents reported their observations and then turned in their consensus to the National PTA. These reports formed the basis for the development of the first Program Review Guide, which rated the shows and then gave, in addition, some information on the quality of the show and an explanation of that particular program. In addition, other training sessions were held for the PTA members and others in the community. The direction of the action plan evolved from the recommendations made from individuals who had come to testify at those hearings.

Since that time, the National PTA has released five Program Review Guides--but that was not enough. The thing that we felt we had to do was to expand the focus of this particular project. So we moved in another direction--toward the development of a TV viewing skills curriculum for classroom and home use. Work is now in progress on a comprehensive series of educational materials, both print and audiovisual, for kindergarten through twelfth grade. The first unit is "Special Effects on Television," and that will be available at the end of the summer of 1980. This subject was selected for early development because of the immediate physical danger to unknowing youngsters who often attempt to mimic television action. Work has begun on the second unit, "Family Awareness," which has been funded by a foundation in New York. The purpose of this curriculum is to show students the fallacies in some portrayals of the American family. Children see families spending little or no time on day-to-day responsibilities of family life. They see them solving even the most dire problems in a very short period of time. These curricula are not in competition with any of the fine curricula that are being developed by others, but they are complementary to any of the curricula presently under development.

Under consideration for the future are other modules on persuasive techniques and characterization. The kinds of effects of television need to be studied and the inherent nature of the medium needs to be taught to our youngsters.

A question that has been asked during the time that the National PTA has been involved in this project is: who is ultimately responsible for resolving the problem of offensive television programming? It is, perhaps, the single most controversial question which has dominated the project from the very outset, and it has been debated heatedly.

This is where we truly look at the ability to develop coalitions, because the blame is with no one. It is a matter of all of us, parents, teachers, professionals, the people in the community and members of the broadcast industry working together. The responsibility must be shared. We feel that advertisers also share this responsibility, as well as the Federal Communications Commission when it licenses stations which provide the programming. The airways belong to the people and it is we, the people, who must make those kinds of decisions. So we have the beginnings of the National PTA's Television Project. Where are we presently in this project? What are we doing? What motivated a volunteer organization of over six million parents, teachers and students to become involved in such a massive project?

Number one, it was a parent's realization of the impact of television on her child. It was talking about it with parents and other community members. Soon a resolution came to the floor of a National PTA Convention. That resolution gave the authority for action and the beginning of the planning and implementation of the project.

Second, it was the realization and concern of parents for the continued pervasive influence of this medium on children. We know change is needed. But often bringing about change means additional commitment, additional dedication, and a different kind of discipline--a discipline of diligence to the tasks, sequential steps to be taken to intervene at the most propitious time. It means that together in a community you develop a plan that is comprehensive, whose purpose is well stated, and that is precise in its goals. It also means the concern of one multiplies itself into a plan whose success potential captures the energies of what we like to call "the human network"--a human network of people who are concerned about children. Across this nation parents, teachers, students, and others in the community joined with us in training sessions and writing letters. They watched television as they had never watched television before. And they began to look for certain kinds of actions in the television programming. The components of each program became very real. For the first time they saw television in a different light. They attended workshops to learn more about the industry, and the public began to know what made this industry tick. They also began to know that they had a responsibility in seeing that there was quality programming for their children. They learned the meaning of the word ascertainment, and acknowledged their responsibility to assist the local stations. They discovered that the airways do belong to the people, and the programming must be done for the convenience, interests, and necessity of the people. They began to understand how they could bring about change. At the same time, other kinds of services were being offered. This is an example of the kinds of things that can happen when you put your shoulder to the same wheel with other people and you build a collaborative program.

Throughout all the hearings, members of the television commission were told that there needed to be some way to get information about television. So, one of the first things that was accomplished was the installation of a hotline in the Television Action Center. This enabled people across the nation to have access to a constant source of information. And it has been used consistently. Also, our Program Review Guide, the fifth one now having been published, goes out to a very broad audience. There is another publication which is also sent out--a newsletter which contains information and results of meetings that are held so that there is a constant source of information going out to the people who are interested in television and its potential for learning for young children. At the same time, training manuals were prepared so that people would know how to go about writing their letters, how to go about the ascertainment process, how to go about these kinds of methods and programs. Involvement? Yes, indeed. We have had a great deal of involvement, and a great deal of commitment. The National PTA has been asked many times to put together a group of people who can serve as a critical review team. Producers and advertisers have come to us and asked us if we would serve in that capacity for them, so this is another thing that is being accomplished.

But, there is something else that we must take cognizance of. The activities that I have mentioned do not stand in isolation. It is one thing to pay attention to this aspect of the television industry and its effect upon children. But what about some of the other things that are critical at the same time? What about those things in the area of opposing deregulation of radio? What does this have to do with the television industry? What about the need to prepare and to give testimony to the FCC on public policy issues? What about preparing and giving testimony to Congressional committees on possible rewrites of the broadcast act? How about the need to serve on advisory committees to local government for the selection of cable systems and encouraging telecommunications policy analysts and decision makers to be aware of the well-being of consumers as their major priority? These things, too, the public is learning about as they work together in collaborative ways.

Yesterday was a very exciting day in the life of the National Television Project. As part of the "present" I would like to tell you that yesterday in Los Angeles we gave awards to the ten top shows in the prime time television industry. And I'd like to share with you now those particular shows: EIGHT IS ENOUGH, which I'm sure you all know is a contemporary family show that does a tremendous job of showing the human and humane side of family life, solving problems and dealing with sensitive issues in a sharing, caring way. The series characters in that show are realistic and identifiable with members of the viewers' own family. A good family role model is portrayed when family members respect one another and resolve conflicts through negotiation and discussion. This is the fifth time that this show has appeared in the top ten of PTA's list and I hasten to add that these are not in any rank order. They are as I have them on my paper, and I must go back and say that CBS SPECIALS came first in this alphabetized order. I'm sure that you all know from PUFF THE MAGIC DRAGON to ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT, CBS leads the networks in excellent special productions. CHARLIE BROWN, BUGS BUNNY, FAT ALBERT, and RAGGEDY ANN AND ANDY mingled with the KENNY ROBERTS SPECIAL and informative issues of CBS REPORTS assure monitors enjoyable fare with insight, information, or laughs for the whole family. This is their second time on PTA's top ten list. CBS SPECIALS, interestingly, have climbed in PTA members' esteem from two stars, up to two-and-a-half stars, three stars, and finally to four stars.

The third show was NBC's LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE. Rural family life in the late 1880s, as portrayed in these sensitive episodes, exemplifies positive human and social values in the family and in the community. They are heartwarming stories and they make lessons in humanity enjoyable for the entire family. This is their fifth time on PTA's top ten.

PRIME TIME SATURDAY, Tom Snyder's weekly video magazine, blends timely reports on current issues with enjoyable, informative feature items. The viewers appreciated the appealing variety as well as the timeliness of news and feature segments. This is its first time on PTA's top ten list. This is also PRIME TIME SATURDAY's first inclusion in the PTA's Program Review Guide. I hasten to point out that this is the first time the awards have been given, although this is the fifth Program Review Guide that has been released to the public from this project.

The fifth program was QUINCY, which blends fascinating medical concepts, a humanistic approach to forensic medicine and informative material on public health and safety to make this a particularly good program. Characterization of Quincy as a dedicated, thorough professional who is willing to fight for the truth is appreciated by the viewers who find the program intelligent and well produced. This is the first time on PTA's top ten list. QUINCY has been consistently rising in the monitors' esteem and is now rated four star.

SALVAGE ONE was on that list, and you know about the scientific information, wholesome values, and non-sexist characterizations that appear in this particular program. Also, SIXTY MINUTES appeared in the top ten on this list for the fifth time. THE WALTONS, a loving, close-knit family which weathered the Depression and are now dealing with World War II by helping each other and friends, has been a favorite with our PTA monitors. You realize that there are 6,000 of these PTA members across the nation who are doing this monitoring and returning those forms to the TV Action Center.

TWENTY/TWENTY with a focus on people is an hour-long video magazine with interviews and features delivering information and interesting issues.

Number ten on our list was WHITE SHADOW. This presents very realistic subject matter, reinforcement of moral messages and sensitive treatment of predjudice. It makes the racially mixed basketball team and their coach objects of the PTA monitors' praise. This is its first time on PTA's top ten list, and this program, too, has climbed from a three-star place in spring of 1979 and its first appearance in the Program Review Guide.

Yesterday was an important day because we wanted to honor programs and networks producing fine quality programs. It was also an interesting day in that in the last three of our Program Review Guides we also have kept track of advertisers. Special recognition was given at the meeting yesterday to Sterling Drug for its major efforts in upgrading its advertising placement. Two seasons ago in the fall of 1978 this corporation had been listed by the PTA as the most offensive advertiser on prime time television during that particular monitoring period. The achievement of 85 percent ad purchase in the top quality shows during this fall, 1979 season certainly represents a significant accomplishment from the PTA's perspective. In the new Program Review Guide, which utilizes a different format, we have not only the top ten, but also the most violent, the least violent, and all of the prime time descriptors. We would like to send this to you along with the advertisers and the descriptors of the programs on the inside. This is new for us. We were told last year at convention, through resolutions, once again that more and more people want to have some guide to television programming so they can work with their children and watch shows they feel are good family viewing. This is our response to that resolution. And so that is the present--what's happening today--in a very brief way.

Now let us look to the future. And what do we see? Again, in the field of television, it seems to me, that the general public and particularly those professionals who work with youth must do some very specific things. First, we must all gain an understanding of how the television industry works. Indeed, how does it operate? What are the ramifications of that operation? We must understand the medium of television itself. We must continue to work for quality programming, especially for our young viewers. And we must implement electronic literacy programs in our schools. Parents, professionals, educators, and youth leaders all need to understand the effects of television on children. And to the extent that we are able, we need to guide children's viewing and discuss with those children the content which they see on the screen. The TV industry must face the inevitable fact that television does indeed have a profound effect on children, and the industry must examine its programming to determine if it is diminishing or enhancing the quality of life in America. On the front of the brochure that the National PTA produced early in the project on electronic literacy was a subtitle, "A New Challenge Confronts the PTA." Any time you accept a challenge, you also accept the possibility that you may fail. You take a risk. When we're talking about television and its impact on children we accept a challenge, but we cannot afford to fail.

THE NEED FOR COMMITMENT

An invited keynote address to the
National Workshop on Television & Youth
March 12-13, 1980

by

Abbott Washburn
Commissioner, FCC

Thank you. I'm sorry that I wasn't able to be here yesterday. We had a Commission meeting. But I am very delighted to have sat in for a while on one of the Task Force panels this morning, and I am looking forward to the summaries that will follow this luncheon.

They tell the story of Oliver Wendell Holmes once when he was on the train. The conductor asked for his ticket and as Holmes went through his pockets, he realized that he must have forgotten it. The conductor said, "Oh that's all right, you look like an honest man." Then the Justice said, "No, you don't understand. It's not a question of where is my ticket, it's where am I going?"

I think this movement, as you called it Charles, definitely knows where it's going. This workshop has no questions about what the goal is. The goal is a media-wise society in which we make the most constructive use of this awesome tool, television--the most constructive use by parents, by educators, by broadcasters, and by young people, with the help of youth-serving organizations, advertisers and government agencies.

For over three years now I have been talking about this growing partnership between educators, broadcasters, and parents, working together constructively, trying to find new ways to improve television and to develop critical viewing skills in students at all levels. And obviously, you have been focusing on that in the sessions yesterday and today.

I was supposed to talk about commitment, but I think commitment clearly is already present. What you have been dealing with is implementation, recognizing all the while that this is going to be a long process. It takes time to devise and mount programs to change viewing habits, to inculcate good viewing habits. But it is a very exciting prospect, and a very important one. What you are looking at here is a new generation of discriminating viewers who are educated in the medium.

"But why has it taken so long to get to this point?" someone asked me the other day. Why are we only just now studying how to use TV intelligently, learning when to turn it on and when to turn if off? Well, we forget, I think that television is a very young medium. It is only 35-years-old, commercially speaking. One wag quipped "Critics should remember that television is still in its infancy; that's why you have to get up and change it so often."

These are some of the mileposts along the way to where we are now. Michael McAndrew worked in Philadelphia, really pointing the way to what you do with TV scripts to teach reading. Rosemary Potter's work in Florida, Lynn

Ganek in New Jersey, and Elaine Sklar in upper New York are more examples. Then the reading and television programs that have come out of some of that work--Capital Cities Program, CBS Reading Program, the NEA grant to Camille Faith over in Baltimore County in that pioneering exercise over there called "TV Literacy." There is the Parent Participation Workshop of NBC under the supervision of Gloria Kirshner and HEW's decision in 1978 to award grants totaling $1 million for the development and testing of critical-viewing-skills-courses at different levels. The underwriting by ABC of the work of Drs. Jerome and Dorothy Singer at Yale, developing courses for third, fourth and fifth grade levels is another. The CBS Library of Congress "Read-More-About-It Project" is another milepost which started here not long ago with the network presentation of ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT. Richard Thomas gets up afterwards and names four books about World War I that you might want to read, including Barbara Tuchman's Guns of August. Dan Boorstin of the Library of Congress told me, by the way, that of all the things he has done since he has been Librarian, he doesn't think anything is more important than working out that "Read-More-About-It" project. I asked why he said that. And he said, "because it touches so many people and it touches them in the home and refers them to books." Then there was, of course, the intensive work of Action for Children's Television, the Parent-Teacher Association, the American Council for Better Broadcasting, and groups like WATCH here in D.C., and all these other dedicated consumer groups whose work has made a big difference. They have made awards for the better programs. They have kept the consciousness high of what this is all about. And then the many children's television conferences sponsored by the NAB, CBS, National Council for Children's Television, NEA--I can't name them all, but never before until this last decade have you had this kind of attention to this subject. As one reason for it, I think we have to credit the FCC's Report and Policy Statement of 1974. And I am very proud that I had something to do with writing that.

Along with this has been a big growth, as you know, in the quality of printed teaching materials explaining programs, like ROOTS, and EDWARD THE KING and the Shakespeare series. A lot of this is done by that excellent organization, Prime Time School Television in Chicago. Some of it is sponsored by the networks; some of it is sponsored by individual corporations like Mobil. The same type of material is in Teachers' Guides to Television, which I think is improved a great deal. And Gloria reminded me she had been going for twelve years with Teachers' Guides to Television. Then, of course, there is the Television Information Office of the NAB and all the work of Roy Danish and his crowd. Then I thought a very important milestone was the National Association of State School Boards, in their meeting of State Boards of Education in Hershey which I was lucky enough to attend in October, 1978 and their resolution there to all fifty state boards to "encourage parents to assume a working partnership with the schools in using public and commercial television to facilitate the formal and informal learning of their children."

Learning how to handle the media becomes even more urgent when we look at the burgeoning new technology. For example, 80 percent of the cable TV systems today are 12-channel systems. Twelve channels seems like a lot when you sit down in the evening to decide what you want to watch. But the new systems will have 40, 50, 60, even more channels. The other day, Warner Cable was awarded the franchise for Pittsburgh. Its new system will have 78 channels. A decade from now 90-channel systems will not be uncommon.

Meanwhile, other channels will be coming into the home directly from satellites overhead to a small dish antenna on your roof or on your window sill. And then there are video cassettes of all kinds and all subjects that will be available, offering more options, more choices.

Last week I spent a fascinating day and a half out in Los Angeles attending a Tele-Text Conference, sponsored by the public station there, KCET. The additional services which this new dimension can add to television are almost unlimited. I was amazed by the scope of those devices. And their educational application is particularly interesting. At the conclusion, for instance, of a NOVA program on the solar system, there could be a follow-up on a tele-text segment in which your child could answer questions, like "which planet is the farthest from the sun--Pluto, Neptune, or Saturn?" And by pressing a little key pad, he or she would interact with the tele-text machine--thus changing TV from a passive to an active medium.

Then too, there is the ever emerging computer technology which will add, or is adding, still more options. Computers are interfacing with the television screen. It is amazing how rapidly young people today are able to master the language of computers. They just take to it like fish to water. And they love the interactive character of it, working on the electronic games, and all the rest of it. When the time comes, they will see nothing at all strange about electronic banking, bill-paying, and electronic mail service. But I don't believe in the predictions of a "paperless society." I don't think the lawyers will let that happen. The lawyers want their 25 copies, as always.

Now, does all this portend a hazard of information pollution, of electronic communications overload? Yes, the answer is definitely yes. If you think you have got a lot now, wait until five years, ten years, fifteen years from now. And that's what really makes this workshop and what you are doing here so important. The American editor, Josiah Holland wrote: "The mind grows by what it feeds on." And there's going to be so much for it to feed on over the next couple of decades that the skill to make wise choices is absolutely essential. People must learn how to make those choices intelligently.

So, there are 78 channels on the cable system in Pittsburgh. What are they going to put on all those channels? More of the same? Or more and better? I remember Ed Murrow saying once: "no matter how many communications technologies are invented, it inevitably comes down to this: someone has to sit down and decide what to say and how to say it," which, of course, is what he did so marvelously well.

Similarly, someone at the other end has to make the choice to receive that message. We want that choice to be an informed choice, not a thoughtless, haphazard, meaningless choice. As the number of discriminating viewers increases, the quality of television fare will rise proportionately. So will the diversity of programs of excellence, addressing the special interests and special needs of particular audiences.

I have been impressed over the past couple of years by the number of sensitive television programs dealing with the problems of teenagers. The needs of young adolescents today are as great, or greater, than those of preschoolers and grade-schoolers. I don't think there has ever been a time in the history of this country when it was quite so tough to be a teenager. (We have a daughter who is almost 16.) For example, on one evening earlier last month--I think it was February 6--CBS scheduled a sobering documentary on teenage pregnancy called BOYS AND GIRLS TOGETHER, narrated by Harry Reasoner. That was followed immediately on the network by a touching two-hour drama on teenage alcoholism called THE BOY WHO DRANK TOO MUCH. Both of these exceedingly useful programs were on prime time. Recently, I made a list of 25 such programs over the past two to three years. It included NBC's outstanding READING, WRITING, & REEFER on which Ed Newman was the interviewer and narrator. This program dealt factually and powerfully with the alarming increase in the use of marijuana in the schools.

Jane Pfeiffer, chairman of NBC, made the decision to run REEFER a second time, and this time it was run at 4 p.m. to catch the afterschool audience. She also waived the rights so that any school could copy it by videotape recorder and use it in the classroom and at assemblies. While hundreds of schools took advantage of this opportunity, there were thousands that did not. Yet, every school could benefit by having a print of REEFER. It shows so graphically how young daily users--some only in the sixth grade--are turned into dropouts and zombies by pot. Any of you who saw that will know the impact of it, because Ed talked with the kids themselves. And the kids, out of their own mouths, showed what this does.

So, a better coordination is needed. Broadcasters cannot rely on teachers and administrators to check TV Guide or their daily newspaper schedules to know about opportunities like this. Educators need to have more time to plan the utilization of resources of this kind. Parents also should be informed in advance. Now, I don't know how that is done, but I know it needs to get done--and it isn't being done adequately now. Perhaps that is something you are already addressing here, or could address.

Incidentally, one problem I have with the FCC's current proceeding with children's television is the narrowness of our definition. This isn't Susan Green's fault, because the definition was there before she seized this nettle. We define it only as those programs specifically designed for children 12-years-old and below. I have suggested, in view of these extraordinarily fine teenage programs and the need in that area, that the Commission consider changing the definition to: "programs contributing to the learning experience of young people 17-years-old and below."

The period of time allowed for filing comments in this proceeding is still open. If any of you would care to comment, we invite you to do so, whether it is in on this question of definition or on any of the other issues. There is a little form that we have, informing people on how they can go about that in our Consumer Assistance Office of the Commission. Or Susan can tell you about that. We want your comments, of course, in that proceeding.

A couple of weeks ago I began getting a bunch of letters--sort of out of the blue--from school superintendents, administrators, and principals, asking for my ideas about education and television. Dr. Robert McGill of the Grand Rapids Michigan Public Schools solved the mystery by sending me this copy of an article in the March, 1980 issue of the Executive Educator. In the middle of the piece are two little sentences of mine about "educators taking more and more interest in the tie-in between home television and children's classroom work." That little thing got all these letters. I submit that it means this is a topic that people in the profession are interested in. And I have been answering these letters personally with appropriate enclosures. And if a summary of the highlights of this workshop is prepared, I will be glad to send that to each of these men and women also.

Congratulations on a very significant conference, and thank you for allowing me to come here today.

III. POSITION PAPERS

From the perspective of...

Critical TV Viewing Curriculum Projects

CRITICAL TELEVISION VIEWING: A PUBLIC TELEVISION STATION REACHES OUT

by

Debbi Wasserman Bilowit
WNET/THIRTEEN, New York

How many times have we heard, "Children spend more time in front of a television set than they do in a classroom?" By now that statement has almost become a cliche. Yet, it remains significant. For, if children are spending that much time watching television, it is a force to be reckoned with--not by ignoring it or condemning it as many advocates insist, but by finding ways to harness that force, by helping children to *turn those viewing hours into active, thinking hours*.

At PBS station WNET, in New York, we began working on this approach about ten years ago. At that time we were conducting workshops in schools to help teachers incorporate our daytime instructional television programs into the classroom. Teachers started to ask us how they could help their children become more active television viewers, how they as teachers could make use of the student's many hours of prime time viewing.

It sounded like a good idea to us. Children watch many hours of television, we thought. Let's help the teachers turn those hours into a teaching resource--not just a few well-produced programs, not a special program here and there, but *every* program, *all* of those hours. How? By adapting some standard learning skills to television, by teaching children analytical skills that they can practice every night when they watch television at home. For example, at some time all children learn how to analyze a story according to its plot, conflict, setting, characters and theme. Those elements also exist in most of the television programs which children watch. Children who learn how to analyze television stories for plot, conflict, characters, setting and theme will not only be better able to understand TV situation comedies or dramas but also will be better able to understand and enjoy the books which they read.

The concept of helping children to understand television is now called "critical television viewing" and, in various incarnations, it is being explored around the country.

The term "critical television viewing" has a different meaning for everyone. More often than not, that definition has to do with a person's individual concerns over television. Some people feel that there is too much violence on television, and for them critical television viewing means developing a sensitivity towards that violence. Some people feel that children watch too much television, and for them critical television viewing means knowing when to turn off the television set. And some people feel that the quality of television programming is poor, and for them critical television viewing means knowing how to evaluate the programs.

To us, critical television viewing is all that and more. It includes pre-planned viewing schedules: an alertness to television's assets and drawbacks; an ability [illegible], an ability to make unique, well-informed judgments about television. Our task is not to persuade people to watch only TV programs that are "good" for them, but to help them develop the inner resources for setting their own personal criteria about what to watch and how to watch it.

WHAT IS CRITICAL TELEVISION VIEWING?

Critical television viewing is "analytical television viewing" or "television awareness." More specifically, critical television viewing skills are:

> The ability to analyze what you see and hear on television;
>
> The ability to evaluate what you have analyzed--for what is good about it, what is bad about it and how it relates to your life;
>
> The ability to express that evaluation--through something you talk about, through something you may write, through something you may choose to read, or through the television programs you select to watch.

HOW DO YOU TEACH SOMEONE CRITICAL TELEVISION VIEWING SKILLS?

The WNET staff teaches critical television through national workshops and print materials. Our approach is to concentrate on what the viewer sees and hears on television--as opposed to developing background knowledge or technical expertise about television production. We approach critical television viewing the same way a language arts teacher might approach the analysis of a novel or poem: by looking at the piece which has been set before us.

More specifically, in our workshops and books we ask children and adults to analyze, evaluate and discuss some of the many different elements that they see and hear on television.

The following are some of those elements, each followed by questions, which we ask people to consider. The first six elements are literary elements which children study in school when they learn how to analyze novels or short stories. The last four are technical elements which contribute to the impact of the program on the viewer.

These elements were identified for us by a number of advisors from the educational community (educational leaders, such as Neil Postman, as well as teachers and school administrators), from the television industry (including Norman Lear and Walter Cronkite), and from the field of television criticism (Lee Margulies of The Los Angeles Times and Robert McKenzie of TV Guide).

Literary Elements

Characters. Who are the characters in the show? What do they look like? How do they dress? How do they move? How do they walk? How do they talk? Books use adjectives to describe characters. What adjectives would you use to describe the characters? Why did you choose those adjectives?

Setting. When and where did most of the action take place? This does not just mean the major settings, but the minor settings as well--some of the places where action might have taken place for only fifteen to thirty seconds. Why did the action take place there? Why do you suppose the director and set designer chose these locations? What do those locations look like? What are some of the details that you can remember from some of those locations?

Conflict. Who is clashing or disagreeing? What are they clashing or disagreeing about? This includes not only the major conflict in the story, but also the more subtle conflicts.

Plot. What happened in the story? How was the conflict resolved? What was the order of events, in detail?

Theme. What is one sentence that expresses the major theme or message of the story? What are the minor themes? How were these themes conveyed (dialogue, casting, plot)? Do you agree with those themes?

Logic. Was there anything in the story that did not make sense? Why do you suppose it did not make sense? Was it because the story deals with a fantasy or supernatural situation, because the program must conform to certain time restrictions, because social convention discourages showing certain things on television, or because the producer/director was careless? How would the story have changed if everything made sense?

Overall Story Content. Did the story content interest you? Did you care about what was going to happen?

Technical Elements

Casting. Did the actors fit their roles? Who else might have played that role? Might the role have been played by someone older, younger, shorter, taller, of another race? How would different casting change the nature of the program? Would different casting contribute to or detract from the theme and the overall thrust of the program?

Make-up and costume. Were the actors' costumes and make-up appropriate to the actors, the time, the place and the situation? How might they have been different?

Music and sound effects. Was the choice of music appropriate for the scene? Did it make the scene better than it would have been without music? Were the sound effects believable? necessary? excessive? too sparse?

Special effects. Did the special effects look real? How do you think they were done? How else might they have been done? Were they necessary?

WHAT IS WNET'S CRITICAL VIEWING SKILLS PROJECT?

We have received two years of funding from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare to develop seven items. They are:

1. A Student Work Text: A workbook and textbook combination has been developed for children in middle school grades which will teach them critical television viewing skills. The student book is

non-judgmental, relates critical viewing skills to language arts skills which are already being taught in the classroom, and it deals with generic skills that can be used with any television program. The curriculum in this book has been tested nationally and is now available for purchase. (Published by Cambridge Book Co.)

2. A Teacher's Annotated Edition to the student work text: This helps the teacher incorporate the student Work-A-Text into a classroom curriculum. It shows the teacher how critical viewing can be taught with television equipment and without equipment in the classroom. (Published by Cambridge Book Company.)

3. A Family Guide: An eight-page family guide will help parents make more positive use of the programs which their children are already watching. It recognizes that many parents do not watch television with their children.

4. A Training Manual for Teacher Trainers: and

5. A Training Manual for Community Leaders: These training manuals are designed to help trainers work with either teachers or families to turn television viewing into a positive experience. In the case of teacher trainers, the manuals will help trainers work with teachers to incorporate critical television viewing into existing curricula. In the case of the community leaders, it will help people such as public librarians and other kinds of community leaders work with families to make television viewing a good experience in the home and to help everybody to get more out of what they're watching.

6. Training Sessions for Teacher Trainers: and

7. Training Sessions for Community Leaders: Besides doing national presentations, we have selected ten sites around the country in which we will conduct one all-day training session with teacher trainers and one all-day training session with community leaders. We will also be working with the public television stations around the country as part of our training, and providing them with special Training Manuals.

DOES CRITICAL TELEVISION VIEWING WORK?

People are constantly asking us if children can actually learn generic critical television viewing skills which can be transferred to reading or writing. People are constantly asking us if children respond well to learning critical television viewing skills. The answer to both those questions is definitely yes. We tested our print materials and workshops around the country in the spring of 1979. Teachers, students and parents in Palo Alto (CA), Stamford (CT), Newark (NJ), Nashville (TN), Salt Lake City (UT) and Lafayette Parish (LA) used our guides and participated in workshops with our staff. In addition, we tested many of the activities in the guides before they were included. Here are some of the things we discovered:

1. Children can transfer their critical television viewing skills to books. Lynne Brenner Ganek, our project writer, is a teacher on leave from the classroom. She visited her old school to test some activities with a sixth grade class. Before she began, she asked the students about books they were reading to see if they could tell her about the characters, setting, conflict, plot and theme. They couldn't. She then showed them a scene from ALL IN THE FAMILY and talked about those elements as they related to the televison program. They responded immediately. Lynne then began to talk with them about a book they had been reading in class in terms of character, setting, plot, conflict, and theme. And we found that most of the children were able to transfer that knowledge about TV story elements immediately and without hesitation to books. Before they had been unable to discuss those books in literary terms, now they could.

2. Critical television viewing can be incorporated into the teachers' current classroom curriculum. The teachers who used our materials in the classroom last spring told us how they incorporated them into their classes. Some of them taught one critical viewing concept a day--about fifteen minutes a day--and related those concepts, as they were appropriate, to other subject areas. For instance, a teacher who taught a unit on news, might spend a few minutes each day doing those critical viewing activities which relate to television news.

Some teachers spent one class period a week on critical television viewing. In some cases, they went though our work text in sequence; in other cases they chose chapters as they were relevant to other existing classroom subjects. One social studies teacher, for instance, used the chapter on television persuasion in conjunction with a unit on propaganda.

And some teachers were able to arrange a special mini-course in critical television viewing which might last from one week to one semester. In those cases, the teachers related language arts or social studies skills as they were appropriate to what was being studied in critical television viewing.

3. Children can grasp critical television viewing skills fairly quickly. One activity which we conduct during our workshops involves observation. We show a scene from a television program to the participants and ask them to list all of the visual details they saw and the sounds that they heard. During one workshop in Nashville, Tennessee, the children became so enthusiastic about enumerating those details which they saw and heard that we had to ask them to pause for a moment to give their parents and teachers time to speak. Another activity involves discussing the theme to a television program or commercial. In Palo Alto we explained the concept of "theme" to the children and then showed them a commercial for a breakfast cereal. We then asked the children "What is the theme of the commercial?" Naturally, at first they noted themes like, "buy our cereal; our cereal tastes good;" but in a very brief amount of time, they were also adding themes like, "women serve breakfast to men; breakfast can be fun; families should eat breakfast together."

Time and time again, we discovered that children were quick to understand critical television concepts and to relate them directly to television programs which they saw. We also found that children were eager to learn how to analyze television. This quick response led us to feel that perhaps we are not teaching the children anything new after all; we are simply helping them to organize and express their thoughts.

Critical Television Viewing is not a panacea. Its use will not suddenly turn everyone into incisive critical thinkers or avid readers. It can, however, help improve family communications, provide teachers with a classroom resource, and help children to make more informed decisions about their television viewing.

We teach children how to read books--how to analyze a novel or a poem and how to discuss the concepts presented in them. Now, let's teach them how to read television as well.

CRITICAL TELEVISION VIEWING FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

by

Charles R. Corder-Bolz
and
Lois Pesz

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory

Most children are regular television viewers by the age of three. Some preschool children would rather watch television than play with their friends. Television programming can have many different effects upon a child's life. Television greatly expands children's awareness of the world around them. Children of the television era are more knowledgeable than the children of previous generations in a variety of topics including symbolic and visual communication, social issues, and historical events. For example, children now know about more the working world, and they gain most of their occupational knowledge from television. However, television is not necessarily a neutral force in our society.

While it is difficult to imagine what life would be without television, social science and educational researchers have recently been able to identify at least some of the ways television affects its viewers. With young children as regular viewers, the television industry integrates them into a mass communications community. However, many young viewers fail to gain the full benefit of television. Moreover, students, especially young students, can be negatively influenced by television.

The negative effects are largely due to three components of the television-viewer interaction. First, television is a communication medium and thus is susceptible to distortion. The events, characters, and actions portrayed, whether in a news program, a documentary, a comedy, or a dramatic presentation, can never be totally real and realistic, but rather are part of an unavoidably distorted, abridged presentation of reality. Second, television, for the most part, is a commercial industry in America and thus must be responsive to commercial pressures. While many television professionals would rather use the industry as a vehicle to bring many enriching programs into people's lives, they do have to contend with the economic necessity of television programs' ability to attract viewing audiences. Third, young children, because of their incomplete cognitive development, often fail to realistically interpret portrayals in television programs and commercials. For example, young children infer that a television character did something bad if something bad happens to the character as a consequence. Also, children are unsophisticated with regard to the differences in many formats used in television advertising.

Students' critical viewing and evaluation of television content is fundamental if television is to be a positive contributor to their lives. By comparing television with other sources of information, students can become more sophisticated consumers of television. Students will be able to begin to recognize and appreciate well executed television programming. Students will be able to identify and incorporate information and ideas presented on television. Students will be able to more accurately discern the elements of truth in television commercials.

The task of teaching critical television viewing skills to elementary school students is difficult. In order to teach children to critically view television, two major elements of children's interaction with television need to be addressed. First, much of children's television viewing behavior is habitual. Viewing habits are developed over time in response to the viewing environment and are likely to be very resistant to change. Research in habit development and change indicates that a change in the environment over a long period of time is necessary to change habitual behavior. Second, critical television viewing skills incorporate critical thinking skills. The general interest in teaching thinking skills to students has declined because it has become apparent that such skills are not easily taught, especially within the time frame of a few days, weeks, or even months. The acquisition of reasoning skills appears to be a cumulative maturational process that occurs as a result of an increasing use of such skills in a variety of settings. Because of the characteristics of these two elements, any intervention to enable and encourage students to use critical viewing skills will requires a locally active effort over a period of many months. Previous efforts to teach specific critical viewing skills, for example, in a time period of a few weeks have been unsuccessful.

The USOE Critical TV Viewing Skills Project

The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) under a two-year contract with the U.S. Office of Education has conducted a program designed to teach critical television viewing skills to elementary school students. As outlined by the U.S. Office of Education, the program focuses on eight primary television viewing skills: (1) ability to distinguish program elements; (2) ability to make judicious use of viewing time; (3) ability to understand psychological implications of advertising; ((4) ability to distinguish fact from fiction; (5) ability to recognize and appreciate differing views; (6) ability to understand content of dramatic presentations, public affairs, news, and other programming; (7) ability to understand style of dramatic presentations, public affairs, news, and other program formats; and (8) ability to understand the relation between television programming and the printed word.

The philosophy of the project has been to reach elementary school students directly as well as indirectly through their parents, teachers, and leaders of youth organizations. A long-term effort is required in order to teach students critical TV viewing skills. Teachers and parents who have the primary opportunity to have an impact upon students are necessary to the success of this long-range effort. Therefore, materials and activities have been developed not only for students, but also for parents and teachers. Furthermore, traininning manuals and workshop materials have been developed for education, parent, and youth leaders who can train other parents, teachers, and youth-serving professionals.

Three specific tasks have been performed to reach students, their parents and their teachers.

1. Curriculum materials for students, parents and teachers have been developed, field tested, and revised;

2. Workshops and training materials have been provided to leaders of parent, education, and youth-serving organizations;

3. National dissemination of the materials has been planned and conducted.

Emphasis has been placed upon specific materials and dissemination approaches designed to reach a wide range of socioeconomic levels and cultural groups. The objective has been to maximize the impact of the project for all elementary school students, including students in poor rural and poor urban settings who are usually difficult to reach.

Curriculum Materials

Materials for students, teachers, and parents were developed to accommodate the particular needs of each of three kinds of users: students, teachers, and parents. The materials are designed for individual or group use at school or at home and require little or no adult supervision, especially for the older students.

Student Materials. The philosophy of the student materials is to increase students' awareness and understanding of television at a level appropriate for the cognitive skills with specific materials which are naturally interesting to students. The materials are visually attractive and substantive but simple to understand. Both fairy tales and realistic storybook characters have been developed. Through charming stories and interesting games, young students are introduced to a variety of TV viewing concepts. In the fairy tales, these concepts are interwoven subtly with the adventures of the make-believe characters. In the more realistic storybook series, the characters serve as models for appropriate viewing behavior.

THE FROG FABLES feature See-More Frog, a delightful character, who sets out to "see more" of the world and to learn about something called "TV." Through a series of adventures and misadventures, See-More meets Tuner-Fish as well as some human "frog people" who introduce the reader to TV terms, programming techniques, and the use of TV program guides to plan viewing time. There are three stories to be read sequentially: SEE-MORE FINDS A FRIEND, SEE-MORE FINDS OUT THE FACTS, and TUNER'S TUNE-IN GUIDE. Each story builds on the previous one. The reader progresses along with See-More and Tuner from knowing only that "TV is something to watch" to learning about the many people and pieces of equipment necessary to produce a TV show, to understanding how and why commercials are made.

THE SUZIE STORIES relate the activities and experiences of an average 8-year-old suburban child. Ech story is separate and is based on findings of research on children and television. SUZIE'S BROKEN TV deals with a child's frustration when "there's nothing to do." While the family TV set is in the repair shop, Suzie rediscovers her neighborhood friends, her bicycle, her parents, and the art of conversation. SUZIE MAKES THE MENU conveys the sometimes overwhelming impact of advertising aimed at children. Suzie tries to plan her family's weekend meal from those products she sees on TV commercials. The TV takes over and Suzie ends up with a weird menu plus a lot of food for thought. FAMOUS SUZIE finds Suzie in the spotlight as she and her prize-winning safety poster are filmed for a TV news broadcast. However, Suzie is dismayed to find that what people see on the TV news is not always the whole story. Her parents use mediation techniques and a lot of patience to help Suzie understand TV news reporting, editing, and visual interest value of stories.

STORIES FOR SPECIAL AUDIENCES feature realistic children from various ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds as the main characters. While the characters have specific environments and different outlooks on life, their stories have universal appeal. A COWBOY COMES TO DINNER is a humorous account of the misconceptions an Indian girl and her new friend (who lives on a ranch) have regarding each other. Their preconceived notions and biases are based on their most prominent means of information--the TV's distorted portrayals of cowboys and Indians.

The TV FROG LOG, illustrated with the same delightful characters as THE FROG FABLES, complements the lessons learned from these books. THE FROG LOG encourages planned and selective viewing habits. Symbols for different types of shows help children identify program formats. As an added attraction, they learn to read, write, and plan, too.

The TV DISCOVERY GAME with its bright colors and TV-related graphics is designed to be played while watching a program that tells a story. Question cards are divided into three decks--one for younger children, one for older children or adults, and one for commercials. Each player picks a question in turn. If the player can answer correctly or make a judgment, he or she moves along the "road to discovery" about television.

Teacher Materials. The philosophy of the teacher materials is to encourage and assist teachers in using television as an educational resource. It was felt that while teachers likely would be resistant to teaching TV viewing, they would be very receptive to attractive supplementary materials utilizing television viewing to teach educational objectives of their own choosing. For example, students can learn English grammar by watching for grammatical mistakes on TV commercials. When teachers and students use television in specific educational tasks, students learn to perceive TV differently, begin to evaluate TV programming, and realize that TV is an important educational resource. With this rationale in mind, SEDL designed a compact set of TEACHER CUE CARDS that suggest ideas of how television can be used to teach areas such as language arts, math concepts, geography, history, science, health, and social studies. The cards are color coded according to subject matter. They list the TV viewing skills to be taught, the basic skills within the subject that will be taught, and give ideas for activities or discussion. Each card is also labeled for grade appropriateness. Teachers are encouraged to adapt, expand, and add to the idea cards. The TEACHER CUE CARDS also refer to other SEDL critical TV viewing skills materials for children which can be used to further enhance the activity or study. Although information about television is presented, the major emphasis is on helping the teacher achieve the educational objectives she or he has set for the students. In this way it is thought that teachers will use the materials, the students will realize a greater benefit from the materials, and the students will learn to view television critically.

Parent Materials. The philosophy of the parent materials is to present ideas to make television viewing at home a positive part of children's lives. The materials are based upon the assumption that parents are doing a good job of parenting, that parents have different parenting styles and approaches, and that parents have varying amounts of time available to interact with their children. A positive approach is used rather than one which puts the parents through another "guilt trip." Guides for parents in the form of a set of family-oriented newsletters entitled "TELEVISION: A FAMILY FOCUS" have been developed. Each issue has a basic theme concerning one aspect of children's TV viewing. On this theme there are one or more brief articles for parents with "how to" emphasis. These articles may be adapted by parent organizations for programs or leaders of youth organizations who are utilizing TV viewing in their programs. In addition, each issue includes a story for the whole family. Some issues have TV Bingo games which help everyone identify different program elements. Others have word games. In addition, there are poems and suggested activities on each theme. Titles of the five issues are "For Parents Only: Learning to Use TV"; "What is Your Prime Time?"; "Learning From TV"; "Coping with Commercials"; and "Putting TV in Perspective."

A TRAINING MANUAL for teaching critical TV viewing skills has been written for all those adults--parents, teachers, educators, church leaders, and youth leaders--who have an interest in developing workshops for interested adults in their communities and organizations. Besides a short chapter on basic philosophies of adult education, there is an overview of the SEDL project, a comprehensive chapter detailing results of studies on TV and children, and a bibliography and resource list. The main portion of the TRAINING MANUAL includes specific ideas for working with each of the target adult groups--teachers, parents, and youth leaders. Sample activity and workshop scripts are included in each category. The book is designed to be used in part or in whole to effectively disseminate the teaching of these important skills to children.

Dissemination and Distribution

A major element in the SEDL project is the effective national dissemination and distribution of the curriculum and training materials. Many good educational and public information materials never reach their intended audience. Two major reasons appear to cause the lack of success of many materials development and distribution projects. First, materials developed for a national audience often fail to address people's particular needs and thus have a distant and remote feeling: "They're great, but I don't need them." Secondly, such projects very rarely have an organization or network that reaches the grassroots nationally. These are both major, critical barriers to successfully teaching elementary school students critical TV viewing skills.

SEDL has attempted to overcome these difficulties by collaborating with national education, parent, and youth-serving organizations. Many of these organizations have assisted in the development of the materials by identifying particular needs of their members. Many organizations have also provided informative evaluations of the materials. Now many of the organizations are assisting in the dissemination of information. While each organization operates differently and has its own policies and priorities, they individually and collectively represent a communication network that can reach literally tens of millions of students and their parents and teachers, and provide informational and educational services to children and families who often are not reached by such services. Therefore, the SEDL project has invested a great deal of time in collaborating with many organizations which directly work with students, parents and teachers.

To keep these organizations and interested individuals apprised of the project's progress, a free newsletter, "TV Viewer," was developed and published periodically. More recent issues have also featured other critical viewing skills projects and research. Fifteen issues have been published with the last issue mailed September 12, 1980.

Publicity. The media has been extremely interested and has helped to disseminate information about the project. CBS Morning News taped a four-minute feature which aired May 29, 1979. The New York Times has had several articles, as have several major magazines. In addition, the Changing Times sent a feature writer to the National Workshop on Television and Youth. She wrote an article based on the workshop that appeared in the August 1980 issue which contained much of the SEDL Family Focus materials. Daisy, the Girl Scout magazine, published "Suzie Makes the Menu" and the editor plans to reprint other stories and materials. The Girl Scout Leader magazine contained an article on television and critical viewing and mentioned the project. Publications of the American Federation of Teachers, Boys' Clubs, Camp Fire, and Parents Without Partners have had articles about the project. The well-known professional magazine, Teacher, has had two articles about the project in Rosemary Potter's column, and Instructor, another widely read teachers' magazine, will carry an article in the November issue.

The training manual and the order form have been incorporated into the Speech Communication Module of ERIC Clearinghouse for Reading and Communication. An additional resource pamphlet entitled, "Resources for Television in Education," which mentions the SEDL project, has been published and distributed to teachers by the Research and Referral Service at Ohio State University.

Field Testing. Materials in field test form were distributed nationwide to one hundred teachers and fifty families. Their participation has undoubtedly raised their awareness and effectiveness in teaching critical television viewing skills. One teacher in New Jersey became so enthusiastic about the materials that she called the newspaper with her story which was subsequently published. In general, the results indicated that the materials are very effective in teaching critical TV viewing skills.

Another factor which has aided the distribution of the materials was the decision to place them in the public domain, and make them available to organizations and individuals in several ways: (1) camera-ready copy of the materials at cost, or (2) printed copies of the materials at cost. Organizations were encouraged to reproduce the materials. It was thought that this method would make materials more readily available to organizations and to special populations, such as poor urban and rural families.

Workshops. Workshops, too, provided the opportunity to disseminate information and distribute materials. One of the primary objectives of the second year of the critical TV viewing skills project was to train leaders of parent, teacher, and youth organizations through workshops. Realizing that it would be difficult to reach children directly and that changing viewing habits would be a slow process, strong emphasis was placed on teaching teacher, parent and youth leaders who have sustained contact with youngsters, and who in turn could teach critical TV viewing skills to children over a prolonged period of time. Hopefully, these leaders would also train other adults who can work with children.

To accomplish this goal, twenty workshops were planned and presented at meetings of major national organizatons having impact on youth. Each workshop was tailored to meet the specific needs and interests of each of the organizations. Information was given about critical TV viewing skills and other research studies dealing with television and children, as well as ideas for using the SEDL materials in the framework of the organizations's programs. Participants were also taught how to train others in the use of the materials. A special two-day workshop in March, 1980--the National Workshop on Television and Youth--provided materials and information for key people in education and youth organizations, the television industry and government.

Summary

Television is a major force in a young students' lives. It is important that television be a positive contributor to children's academic and personal development. Thus, It is important that children acquire and use critical television viewing skills. The best approach to enabling and encouraging students to use critical viewing skills is through their parents and teachers. The SEDL materials for teachers help the teacher achieve established educational objectives. The family materials provide assistance with specific aspects of family environments. The materials for students are naturally interesting to students.

While it is important that the curriculum and training materials be effective, it is equally important that the materials reach students, parents, and teachers. With the limited funds available, SEDL attempted to maximize the impact of the project upon elementary school students throughout the country by obtaining the advice, cooperation and assistance of national and state teacher, parent and youth organizations. It is hoped that the curriculum and training materials will effectively address the specific concerns of parents and teachers of elementary school students so that every student will benefit from the project.

POSITIVE USES OF TELEVISION IN THE CLASSROOM

by

Linda M. Kahn

and

Thomas Rosenbluth
Prime Time School Television

Clearly, the time has come to make constructive use of evening television and to stop regarding television as the enemy. Television can be used to discuss substantive issues, social problems, and to build critical viewing skills in the schools and in the home. Our remarks are written from the perspective of an organization that works with teachers to utilize television in the classroom as an ongoing resource.

For the past ten years Prime Time School Television (PTST), a Chicago-based nonprofit educational organization, has been working with teachers to make positive use of evening television programs. PTST develops teacher guides for outstanding television specials on commercial and public television networks. The guides include a synopsis of the program, discussion questions, student projects, and resources. The idea is to provide teachers with ways to incorporate the use of the program in their classroom activities. The guides are distributed regularly, well in advance of the air date of the program. Typical programs include ROOTS, FRIENDLY FIRE, MYSTERY!, ANNA KARENINA, ONCE UPON A CLASSIC, ABC AFTERSCHOOL SPECIALS, and ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT. Elementary and secondary school teachers receive the guides directly or in Media and Methods, Today's Education or Learning magazines.

In addition, Prime Time also develops curriculum units which utilize all types of television programming and commercials. For example, in the PTST economics unit, a situation program like ALL IN THE FAMILY may be used to discuss an economic concept like supply and demand. In one episode Gloria prepares "chevalle a la Bordelaise," or horsemeat, when the price of beef becomes more than the Bunkers can afford. Students log such information from television and use that information as they begin classroom discussion of various economic concepts. Lesson plans and student readings provide additional information. In both the program guides and the curriculum units, our main goals are to utilize the program information and to make the viewing experience an active one.

The first step involved in utilizing television in a positive fashion is a change in attitude. There is a prevalent and somewhat elitist attitude that television, and other popular arts for that matter, are somehow less valuable than works that appeal to smaller, more specialized audiences. Rather than regard television as some type of cultural blight, it should be accorded the same respect that is given to the written word. In fact, television demands this respect simply because of its social impact. The average student will spend almost as much time in front of the television set as in the classroom. This does not mean, necessarily, that television should be elevated to the same level as Shakespeare, but it should be approached with the same critical seriousness.

If we approach television with an open mind and the realization that an aesthetic standard is just as important for television as it is for any other art, then passive watchers slouching in front of the set can become a thing of the past. One of the major barriers to using television educationally is that not enough people take it seriously. This attitude affects viewing habits. An opera aficionado does not go to a performance of Wagner and carry on a conversation or read his newspaper. Only when viewers begin to think of television as an art form will they learn to be attentive, active watchers.

Teachers or parents can play a major role in energizing the way students watch television. But they must be tactful in broaching the subject. An adult is entering a world that is special to the student, and it must be approached without prejudgment. Many students have built up relationships and strong feelings toward their favorite shows and characters. Most are willing to talk about television, but not if they feel that an opprobrious judgment has already been passed.

It is important that teachers and parents work to transform student viewing habits because television is one of the major shapers in students' perception of reality. A whole generation grew up with Ozzie and Harriet Nelson fixed in their minds as the ideal parents. Television is even more popular today. Programs and stars are reflected on lunch boxes and tee shirts; conversations heard on the set the night before are echoed in conversations at school the next day. It is almost impossible to shield ourselves from television's influence, so we must develop the ability to intelligently analyze the words and images that emanate from it. Specifically, students must develop fluency in the visual language of video and film so that they can understand how editing and camera angles are affecting their viewpoint; they need to become aware of techniques used by advertisers to sell products.

The very pervasiveness of television can be turned to an advantage in the classroom. It is one of the few elements shared by everyone in our society. Almost every student will bring into class some viewing experience. This familiarity tends to make them less shy in expressing opinions or joining in discussions. The educator's task is to stimulate students to re-examine this familiar object with fresh eyes.

Using examples of discussion topics and activity questions that Prime Time School Television has presented in viewing guides to television programs, the following section illustrates ways television can be used as a positive educational force. The examples selected are from a wide variety of programs and show that there is a wealth of educational information in prime time programs as well as "special" broadcasts.

Whether using specially prepared program guides or developing their own curriculum materials, teachers might follow these guidelines for creative practical activities. The activities should capitalize on the information in the program, expanding on that particular topic. Then, the teacher should use the interest generated by the program to motivate students to work on basic skills such as reading, vocabulary, writing and math, as well as to develop more critical viewing skills. Activities should appeal to a wide range of interests so that they are appropriate to a variety of subjects. Finally, activities and discussion topics should be expanded well beyond the limits of the program itself. This type of activity helps the student to realize the interrelation between different facets of our society.

Television Logs: Viewing as an Active Experience

Viewing log activities are important, as they make the students accountable for what they watch on television and help to organize their viewing. The program information is the starting point for discussion and analysis. By directing students to focus on particular issues, the television viewing process becomes an active one.

Logs can be designed for use with dramas and sitcoms as well as with news programs or commercials. The log allows for flexibility in viewing assignments. Not all students will be able to watch a given program. If the logs are organized thematically or by a particular concept, they may be used with any number of programs over a defined period of time. Below is a sample of how a viewing log might be organized and its purpose:

> Have students keep a viewing log for 30 MINUTES, the CBS weekly news magazine for young people. Use the following format:

VIEWING LOG--30 MINUTES

Issue	Questions	Interviewees	Conclusions
Teenage Alcoholism	How wide-spread is the problem?	Teenagers & Parents	The legal drinking age should be raised to 21.
	Is it confined to one class or group?	Police & Teachers	Alcoholism is as serious a problem as drug abuse.
	Should the legal drinking age be raised?		

> The log should be used as a starting point for class discussion:
>
> A. Discuss each segment of the program in terms of accuracy, interest, thoroughness, content, and conclusions. Use specific examples from the viewing logs.
>
> B. Research newspaper and magazine coverage of the same issues and compare the print versions to the

television coverage.

C. Organize a debate about one of the subjects covered on 30 MINUTES. Stress the research involved in investigative reporting and the need to understand and present both sides of an issue. Debates might be about such school issues as coeducational sports teams, honor codes, study halls, dress codes or censorship in school newspapers.

Going Beyond the Program Content

PTST developed a teacher guide for the series WHEN HAVOC STRUCK. The following are some of the discussion topics and study questions geared to one episode in the series, LIFE AT THE LIMIT, about the dangers of race car driving. Once again, the activities reach well beyond the content of the program:

I. LIFE AT THE LIMIT can be used as a starting point for a discussion of death.

   A. How does our society deal with death? Do we tend to ignore or avoid the subject?

   B. These discussions can lead to an analysis of our values, for example, "Do we have a youth-oriented society?"

   C. Our attitudes toward death can be compared to other cultures. This will involve research skills, potential reports to the class.

   D. The students may write a short story or poem dealing with the subject of death. This both gives them an opportunity to creatively express themselves and provides a writing exercise.

   E. A discussion of death is a facet of the program that would be appropriate for involvement.

II. The program can be used to teach vocabulary words and spelling. As a study in vocabulary words and etymology, have the students trace the roots of words that have sprung up from or are used in conjunction with cars. For example, the word "horsepower."

III. The program can be used as a springboard to an historical look at our society. Students could discuss the effect the car had on the manners and morals of The Twenties. An excellent background book is The Big Change: America Transforms Itself, 1900-1950 by Frederick Lewis Allen. The class could also look at the literature of the period: F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby or The Rievers by William Faulkner.

IV. The program can be used to discuss modern man's concept of space and time. As we move faster, do distances seem smaller? Is there such a thing as an isolated community today?

Using Popular Evening Television Series to Study History

Evening television series present a view of life during different time periods in American history. Teachers can capitalize on the popularity of the programs as they incorporate viewing assignments into that curricula. The activities below are intended to promote study of American history and to develop language arts skills as well as stimulating active television viewing.

Research and discuss life in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century. How does LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE depict each of the following: transportation, occupations, tools and technology, clothes, recreation, education? Research each category either as a class or in small groups. Set up classroom displays of old tools, clothes, maps and magazines. Visit a local museum to see artifacts, historical documents and art objects of the era.

What do the Ingalls do for entertainment? How much leisure time do they have? What kinds of games do the children play? What kinds of toys do they have? Write a short story about life without TV.

Explore the kinds of technology used on the Ingall's farm and in their home. What farm equipment is used? Compare it with equipment used today. How are clothes washed? How are meals prepared?

In what ways is the school the Ingalls children attend similar to or different from your school? Imagine that you attend their school for one week. Write a diary recording your observations and feelings.

Using large sheets of paper, create time lines comparing occupations, modes of transportation, clothing styles, leisure activities, teaching methods, tools and technology for the time periods represented by family programs such as LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE (1870-80), THE WALTONS (1930-40), HAPPY DAYS (1950's), EIGHT IS ENOUGH and FAMILY (1970-80). Make a separate time line for each time span. You may wish to use pictures of clothes, tools, etc., with accompanying explanations. (Kahn, Linda. Learning Magazine. October, 1979.)

Using Television to Teach Citizenship and Social Issues

When considering the needs of youth in the age of television, one cannot overlook development of citizenship skills, of decision-making and responsibility for one's action. The program FRIENDLY FIRE, which aired on ABC in April, 1979 dramatized the efforts of a family to investigate their son's death in Vietnam. In the process, Peg and Gene Mullen lose complete faith in the U.S. government. The story of their pain is inseparable from the scar that Vietnam left on our country.

Television brings the world into our homes. We witness news events as they happen: assassinations, wars, invasions, elections, demonstrations. News coverage of political candidates encourages participation in the electoral process in terms of gathering information about candidates and issues.

The following activities excerpted from the PTST teacher guide were suggested in connection with FRIENDLY FIRE to probe students' understandings and conceptions of citizenship. The tie-in with literature is more than just a reading exercise. It is an exercise to examine documents written in a different time to explore our changing views of citizenship. Again, the program becomes the point of departure for discussion.

> What is the proper relationship between a citizen and a democratic government? What happens to this relationship in times of national emergency? Was the proper relationship violated during the U.S. involvement in Vietnam? Was the Mullens' behavior proper or excessive? The following describe models for democracy and will be useful resources for this discussion: Plato's Republic, Henry David Thoreau's essay "Civil Disobedience," and the Declaration of Independence.
>
> Discuss the poem "The Unknown Citizen" by W.H. Auden in regard to FRIENDLY FIRE. Can Michael Mullens be compared to the "unknown citizen"?

The theme of what is a good citizen also may be used in connection with cartoon programs and popular dramatic series. Are the cartoon characters, SUPERFRIENDS, good citizens? Is THE INCREDIBLE HULK a good citizen? Does a person need superpowers to be a good citizen? What is a good citizen?

Problems on television are generally resolved. As students watch programs, teachers and parents should stress the alternatives to any given conflict in a sitcom or drama. The ability to choose among alternatives, to select a course of action or a solution to a problem and then to follow through responsibly on that action, accepting the consequences, is an essential skill. Students might role-play endings to a given show. Role playing alternatives allows freedom of experimentation. Writing letters to the protagonist of a drama in which students state their choice of action or rewriting endings from another character's viewpoint are useful in getting students to consider options other than those presented in the television program.

As we work with today's elementary and secondary school students, we recognize the critical role of television as a learning resource. Using program information about current events, historical periods and scientific advancements provides teachers with a learning outlet accessible to virtually every student. Incorporating television viewing assignments into the curriculum provides countless opportunities to deal with the impact of the medium by examining heroes and role models, separating fantasy from reality or analyzing the audio-visual techniques. Television is a part of the students' daily lives. As such, we need to harness its power into productive learning experiences.

TELEVISION AND YOUTH:
THE IMPORTANCE OF CRITICAL VIEWING SKILLS

by

Donna Lloyd-Kolkin
Far West Laboratory

This paper is written from the purview of one who has overseen development of one of the four Critical Television Viewing Skills projects funded by the U.S. Office of Education. At Far West Laboratory in San Francisco, we worked with public television station WGBH in Boston and Educational Testing Service in Berkeley, CA to develop and field test curriculum materials for the high-school-level student. This paper reviews the need for the curriculum, some of the issues we encountered, the solutions we identified, and our view of the future.

The need to train students in critical television viewing skills is imperative. Students at all grade levels spend a considerable amount of their leisure hours in front of the set. In fact, one estimate has it that the average student will have logged 18,000 hours watching TV before high school graduation compared to 11,000 hours in the classroom. For many observers, the amount of viewing is the issue--hours spent watching television are hours not spent reading, engaging in imaginative play, socializing, or playing outdoors. And this is a significant problem, especially for the child who seeks solace from TV on a regular basis in the absence of friends.

Another issue which concerns many observers is the quality of the programs viewed during the child's many hours before the set. These observers contend that rather than being delighted or engaged by well-written, imaginative programs, the child viewer is barraged by violence, stereotypes, poorly written and poorly executed formula programs. Content analyses of television programming confirm many of these claims.

There is further concern that television is a pervasive educator, teaching a curriculum that may run counter to that of traditional educators. Clifton Fadiman, for example, asserts:

> There is no way of reconciling the values of literature or science with the values of the TV commercial. There is no way of reconciling the vision offered by Shakespeare or Newton with the vision of life offered by the "Gong Show."

While we wait for television to reform itself--or be reformed--we are still confronting those many hours of viewing time. The solution identified by many and set into actuality by the U.S. Office of Education was to develop curriculum and family materials to assist students in becoming more aware and discriminating consumers of the medium. In 1978, the agency contracted with four organizations to develop materials at the elementary, middle, secondary and post-secondary levels.

In developing the secondary-level curriculum, the first problem we encountered was an adequate definition of critical television viewing skills. What, precisely, were we hoping students would be able to do after studying a curriculum? A series of meetings with high school students, teachers, parents and consultants generated a list of 50 different skills. We consolidated these into four over-arching skills that we felt adequately defined what we were attempting. These four skills are:

1. The ability to evaluate and manage one's own television viewing.
2. The ability to recognize the arguments employed on television and to counter-argue.
3. The ability to question the reality of television programs.
4. The ability to recognize the effects of television on one's own life and the lives of others.

To develop these skills, we felt we had to teach the content areas of the business of television, the production of programs, and regulation of the medium. In part, this was due to the consideration that high school students will very shortly be adult citizens and need to understand the influences of television on consumer choice as well as to "talk back" to their TV. Another basic consideration we were concerned about was the need to emphasize the basic skills in the curriculum--thus, there are plenty of written and verbal exercises, graph and chart interpretations, and a wide range of reading of various levels and range of opinions.

We originally designed the curriculum as a one-semester course, but discovered over time that many schools felt they would be unable to offer such a course as an elective in already crowded school schedules. Thus, we revised the text so that each one of the seven units could be taught in isolation from the rest.

Another problem revealed by the formative evaluation of the curriculum, and later confirmed in our workshop training experiences, is that many teachers feel unequipped to teach critical television viewing skills since they have received no training themselves in this area. Thus, we revised the teacher guide to the curriculum so that it contains day-by-day instructions plus class discussion questions for each unit.

The final touches are now being put on the classroom materials. The student textbook is entitled Inside Television: A Guide to Critical Viewing. The family materials were an outgrowth of the classroom curriculum; A Family Guide To Television is a short, attractive booklet with quizzes, games and activities for family members to use to learn about television and explore their own values and behavior in regard to the medium. A Family Guide To Television is available at no cost by writing the Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, CO 81009, requesting Catalog No. 515H entitled Children and Television.

We are now engaging in a year of educator and parent/community leader workshops to encourage use of the curriculum materials and introduce participants to critical television viewing skills. Among teachers, we find that those who are familiar with the medium are very excited about the materials; those who have not thought much about television need further exposure to the issues in this field before they recognize the importance of critical viewing skills in their curricula. Thus, teacher awareness remains an important issue if critical viewing skills are to become widespread among America's students. In addition to teachers, school policy makers must also become aware of the need for and importance of this new curriculum offering.

Among parents, we find a major problem in identifying organized parent groups among parents with adolescents at home. There is also a major problem in encouraging parents to come to training sessions--an indication that parent concern about television, once their children become teenagers, is not great or that parents feel they cannot influence their child's viewing behavior at this age. And to some extent they are correct. Generally, teenagers watch less television than other groups and often serve as viewing models for their parents--a contrast to their earlier years when Mom and Dad set the pattern for viewing behavior.

For the next several years, the most pressing need is to continue the work already begun. There is a real need to conduct further basic and applied research on the range and variety of critical television viewing skills which should be taught, and the teaching methods most applicable. Further teacher and parent training is sorely needed, as well as awareness sessions for school policy personnel. Pre-service training of teachers in this area can be expected to emerge, I believe, within the next few years. With concerted effort, we can develop and further refine critical viewing skills materials and methods so that the future lives of our children are truly enriched by their television experience, and not mesmerized by it.

VIEWER EDUCATION--IT'S JUST BEGINNING

by

Ben T. Logan
Media Action Research Center

Four years ago, soon after I began putting most of my time into improving the television experience, I began to feel like the drunk who is trying to get from the front gate to the door of the house and keeps running into the only tree in the yard. Each time he goes back and starts over only to hit the tree again. Finally, he sinks down at the base of the tree, saying, "Lost, lost--in an impenetrable forest."

The whole area of improving television's role in our lives, demanding better programs, becoming "literate" viewers, using TV positively--all that sounded so logical when I began and has become so incredibly complicated. And the tree in the yard that I keep running into most is us, the viewers.

The TV experience (and our relationship to it) is something few of us are ready to cope with in any rational way. Asking us to get objective about it bewilders us because it is like asking a fish to define the water it takes for granted, and it irritates us because it seems to suggest we may have to change or even give up something that is like a second head.

Something I've had to do--something anyone who hopes to help bring change in this field must do--is come to a better understanding of my own immersion in TV. This excerpt from the book, Television Awareness Training - The Viewer's Guide, hints at where I've been:

> ...I am a rather well-disciplined person and have tended to live out my values, but television was more than I was prepared to handle. It is the most demanding, tempting, seductive medium of change I have ever faced. It seems to have been designed with all my needs, interests, vulnerabilities, and weaknesses in mind. It seems to know all about my tendencies to be passive and lazy, my willingness to suspend judgment while I stare at the screen and frantically construct images out of dots, too busy doing that to question. I am hooked on fingertip availablity of a big, exciting, exotic world. I am beguiled by a romantic never-never land where today's behavior has no tomorrow consequences and where things/products from this Aladdin's lamp reach out to me, promising to make me sexier, happier, wiser, pain free, and more successful at everything from being a great lover to keeping my barber from ever seeing a ring around my collar.
>
> Television all too easily becomes my modern fairy tale book and I a child again when I view it, disappearing into nothing, looking for happy times, easy solutions and wanting them to come from outside myself and save me from myself, do my thinking for me, tell me who I am and what

> I'm supposed to do.
>
> We are irretrievably linked, me and my TV. (Sing to same tune as "Me and my R.C."). Even if I never viewed again, and I do and will because I find it valuable and interesting, I am still swimming in its universe, where it has become the most pervasive and persuasive of all values' teachers. My own identity and reality can never again be fully separated from the myths and facts of the television universe (1).

I think a lot of us who wanted something more from the TV experience have been terribly naive. We expected too much, wanted TV to be "prosocial" and "culturally enriching," wanted it to be the magical new technology that would lead us out of our ignorance, be the great new positive teacher.

It was a good vision, maybe, but not very linked with reality. The goal of commercial TV is not to be positive or pro-social; the goal is to make money. The TV industry is very good at that. One of the reasons is that it knows a lot about us, particularly how to keep us watching by the tens of millions. TV isn't going to change much while we go on doing that, because big audience is big money. One minute of air time on the 1980 Super Bowl telecast cost advertisers $468,000 (2).

From the beginning, we viewers wanted the industry to take more responsibility than we were willing to take. We surrendered ourselves to the screen and got pretty much what we deserved.

We can and must work for better programming and increased choices, but we can and must also change how we use TV, how we let it use us.

My own work in viewer education has mainly gone into Television Awareness Training (T-A-T) developed by Media Action Research Center (MARC) in cooperation with the Church of the Brethren, American Lutheran Church, and the United Methodist Church. T-A-T is a curriculum which helps persons become more aware of the messages and influence of the television experience, more creative in the use of TV, and workers for a television system that better serves the needs of the public. T-A-T resource materials include a text/workbook, nine films, a leaders' training manual, and a design for study in settings ranging from short presentations to major workshops of eight two-hour sessions.

T-A-T National Trainers conduct weekend workshops throughout the United States. Persons participating in the intensive training events have an opportunity to become accredited T-A-T Leaders, equipped with training resources for leading workshops and making presentations in their own areas.

I have led dozens of widely varied groups through Television Awareness Training experiences. The events have triggered both encouraging and discouraging reactions--great enthusiasm, open hostility, clear evidence of serious and life-controlling addiction. Some participants have learned, grown and changed. Some have rejected any hint of change.

A key lesson: the relationship each of us has with TV is personal. Any educational effort to deal with that relationship must be equally personal. We cannot prescribe for each other. We can provide processes and opportunities that help each of us sort our television experience and decide to use it in ways that more nearly represent who we are, who we want to be, how we want to spend the precious ticking-away moments of our lives.

TV viewing is not really communal, not a shared event. Even when we watch with others, its subject matter is rarely exposed to other points of view by good critical discussion. Thus, the whole idea of dealing with the TV experience in group settings seems threatening and strange to many persons, and calls for careful planning, trained teachers and good teaching resources.

Television Awareness Training was designed primarily for use with adults, but many T-A-T leaders find the system works well all the way down to the fifth grade because the resources are very adaptable. The key is finding the age-level reference points that get and hold the students' interest.

Despite the effect of age level on program selections, it appears that the basic TV experience is often very similar for all ages. In a TV Guide article (3), a social worker who works with teenagers suggests that teenagers are not unlike the average working person who comes home tired from the job and sits down in front of the TV.

> They turn it on to anything...TV fills empty buckets. It's an antidote to loneliness and the boredom of not having anything to do. The teenager doesn't talk to anyone in his family anyway. They'll only hassle him. TV doesn't talk back or make demands. And it can be a relief from doing homework or worrying about the terrible present or the impossible future.

There is a real challenge here for educators and parents alike. Teenagers need help in finding creative alternatives to use in filling those "empty buckets." And they, like the rest of us, need an opportunity for learning how to use TV for something more than escape.

I have used Television Awareness Training successfully on many occasions with high school juniors and seniors. I have also failed a few times, but I've taught enough so I don't expect every day to be a winner. Finding where TV fits into their agenda is what breaks the awful ongoing sound of my own voice and brings the turned-off faces alive.

Once, in a session on how TV viewing can set us up for receiving and believing stereotypic images of females, I couldn't seem to get anyone's attention. Then I said, "Do you think your parents or teachers ever decide what you are like from the teenagers they see on TV?"

That one question generated the interest and energy for a searching forty-minute discussion. For some students, it was their first real thinking about stereotyping. Follow-up reports from sessions often indicate that a single such discussion can change how TV is used.

T-A-T Leader, Melodie Davis of Harrisonburg, Va., works a great deal with young people and lists the following as important clues and entry points:

1. High schoolers have a natural interest in TV, its stars, and programs. A teacher who is careful can ask kids to watch almost any decent program and wind up with a productive, planned discussion.

2. I find a lot of high schoolers trying to be "sophisticated" and not wanting to be "taken in" by TV or anything else. They've learned to be very skeptical especially of advertising. This leads to good discussions of tricks used in commercials.

3. They do enjoy reminiscing and calling out names of favorite shows and characters and laughing at each others' favorites. This exercise is a good "ice breaker" and helps everyone jump in with both feet. They are also still able to remember getting scared at thriller shows, experiences of disappointments with products advertised, and so are quite fascinated at being "let in on" the various techniques used in making commercials and programs.

4. In talking about TV news, I found the high schoolers especially interested; they are often told by teachers to watch the news but not how to watch; they were surprised by the nuances and different ways the networks have of reporting the same events. They were quick to catch the difference between news and sensationalism.

Many other T-A-T leaders also cite advertising as a good entry point. Commercials are short, familiar and attention-getting. They are asking us to believe something, and teenagers love to argue with them and look for deception. That kind of discussion can lead into the more subtle area of identifying all the secondary messages about relationships, sexuality, stereotypes.

Experience with sessions on TV news is more mixed. Some groups find the news stuffy and patronizing and are eager to do a Saturday Night Live kind of analysis of it. Others see the news as absolute fact and the news deliverers as uncriticizable stars. What really works is a session where you have a mixture of the two points of view. Viewing assignments that bring out variations in how different networks or channels cover the same story can help demythologize the news.

Helen Burns, T-A-T leader from Atlanta, estimates she's worked with about 500 young people from fifth through twelfth grade in the last three years. Given her experience and training, the T-A-T films and exercises, she feels she can get into dialogue with just about any group on the subject of TV. "They're willing to have fun and are not scared of me or the subject," she says.

She finds it is essential to admit her biases about TV right at the start, be open and vulnerable, keep a sense of humor and not go on the defensive. "Meet them on their terms," she advises. "I take my shoes off, sit on the floor with them. And if you deal in facts and avoid judgments, you don't have to be apologetic."

She relies on a technique used often by T-A-T leaders to get started with a group. Saying that she watches TV herself, she then takes a survey of how many working TV sets are in each home. Homes with six or seven sets are quite common. This often legitimizes TV and defuses hostility.

One session Helen Burns led turned out exceptionally well because there were some adults present. In response to filmed excerpts of TV violence, the adults were shocked and the adolescents said, "So what? We see that all the time." The reasons for that great discrepancy in reaction became the focus of a very good discussion.

A frequent student response to T-A-T sessions is in words such as "I never thought of that before, but there it is." Several leaders report almost identical reactions.

A favorite T-A-T exercise asks participants to become people from space who are studying Americans, using TV signals as their only source of information. Their goal is to take back to their leaders answers to such questions as: "What are men and women like? What do the young do? What is important? What do people value highly? What do they do for a living? What's their purpose in life?" Questions are added or changed to fit the group. With youth, one might add such items as, "What are all the things autos are used for? What do young people do that adults approve of? Disapprove of?"

After describing Americans using only TV as a source, participants become Americans again and talk about how it feels to be characterized strictly from TV images.

Leaders who work with youth find the space exercise a must. It's fun. But more importantly, I think it works because it sets up a neutral territory, letting the students become third parties rather than having to answer for themselves and reveal more than they want.

Some of the experiences of Ruth Pflager, Cleveland T-A-T Leader, provide warning signals for schools. She finds she succeeds best if she can convince students she is not a teacher (she isn't). She encounters real resistance to use of workbooks, which seems to symbolize a boring, packaged approach to education. She has been in schools where the room arrangment is sacred, preventing any attempts to form a circle and be more informal.

The module on sexuality holds student interest well, Pflager says. TV is the common message source providing a good entry point, allowing students to talk about sexual behavior of TV characters and avoid being more confessional than they are ready to be.

When leading sessions on violence, Pflager encounters mixed messages. Students say they are learning from TV violence but are confident what they learn has no influence on their behavior. On stereotyping, a common response is, "You are picking everything apart and making too much of it."

That is not an unusual reaction from any age group. Many participants in workshops are startled by the idea of looking at TV for value messages. They have thought of television as values-free entertainment, and some are willing to argue that to the death. Here, as in many situations, leaders have to be willing to back off, look for other entry points, and avoid arguments having to do with logic. Reaching a consensus on logic is not a T-A-T goal. The goal is to help people get new perceptions about the TV experience.

In helping a high school social studies department set up an ongoing study of TV, I found many students were extremely research-minded and just need a little help in designing workable research projects. Some of the ideas that sparked special interest were:

> Finding out to what extent teachers get messages of what teenagers are like from TV.
>
> Determining what the composite image of teenagers is on TV.
>
> Monitoring viewing habits of young siblings, keeping logs of what is watched, how much, and correlating behavior changes with program content.
>
> Determining different perceptions of a program by a parent as compared to the teenager. This had a hidden agenda--getting into discussion with parents about a subject neither parent or teenager were otherwise willing to discuss.
>
> Watching programs which capture large teenage audiences and looking for observable linkages of physical behavior, mannerisms, and dialogue at school the next day.

Working with a group on TV's tendency to stereotype--whether by omission or by the way persons are treated--provides a good example of how the personal entry point leads to expanding perceptions. Step 1: Students become aware that they are being stereotyped. Step 2: They become aware that they and TV are stereotyping others. Step 3: They are often ready to look at stereotyping on a broad social level.

A Time Magazine essay (4) spoke to the seriousness of just one example of TV stereotyping--that of blacks.

> ..Whites know about whites, and possess a built-in reality adjuster that makes all the necessary corrections and allowances for exaggeration and stupidity when whites are being portrayed. Blacks know something about whites too. But whites in the U.S. still do not know all that much about blacks; most whites possess no automatic focus mechanism to tell them what is nonsense and what is not. Whites receiving a brutalized, stupid or stereotyped image of blacks through TV are liable to tell themselves, "Why yes, that's the way blacks are."
>
> An even more urgent problem involves the kind of image that young blacks, who are among the most addicted TV watchers, receive of their own race...

One T-A-T exercise gets at the problem by asking participants to play detective and look for the missing persons on TV--native Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, old people, black people. Are they there? How are they portrayed? How powerful, how important, how respected, how likeable are they? It's interesting to offer a prize for the first authentic TV sighting of a native American in a contemporary setting.

As a continuation of the exercise, each participant lists groups he or she doesn't have direct contact with and develops alternate ways of getting more accurate information.

This moves education about TV into a broader educational area. There is no way to study just TV. In studying it we also study ourselves because we are in relationship with TV. For me, this means we have only begun to glimpse the educational possibilities TV offers.

Media Action Research Center has just completed development of a church school curriculum, Growing with Television (5), with leaders' guides and student leaflets for a twelve-session course on five age levels.

In the curriculum, students are asked to be archeologists of the present, using TV as a way of seeing our values today, just as archeologists of the future might use a library of video tapes in learning what twentieth century Americans were like, what they valued.

The emphasis is on values clarification, with TV as the common experience, the provider of behaviors, ideas and ideologies against which participants compare their own values. In that process, each person comes to know him or herself better, learns about the good and bad of TV, what to seek, what to avoid, how to view critically, how to talk about the TV experience and remove it from isolation.

I see the Growing with Television curriculum as a good example of how our TV experiences can be used to learn about TV and at the same time be much more--helping us learn about a rich variety of other subjects, including ourselves. I hope the USOE-sponsored critical viewing skills materials will enable public school teachers to move on to those broader learning opportunities.

Television is a school system. It teaches many hours a day and it's a rare person who ever finishes that school. It "holds classes" for people of all ages, starting with children so young that our word "preschooler" is now an inaccurate term.

The TV school system has no school board, no one working for a balanced curriculum, checking for dangerous secondary values messages, or investigating what viewers have "signed up" to take. The teaching screen does not see our confusion or sense our unanswered questions. If you fall into the fireplace and catch fire while watching, even a nice TV person like Fred Rogers will just go right on saying he likes you just the way you are.

Television is random. Turn it on to any functional channel, something comes onto the screen, and we can watch for hours without making any choices beyond the decision to turn it on. If we use TV randomly, as many of us do, we get a very questionable education, all the more questionable since we don't know we're being educated.

But of course we don't have to use TV randomly at all. We can say no to television sometimes and say yes to more creative alternatives. We can view thoughtfully, selectively, with our minds turned on so that the learning we do is also thoughtful and selective. We can help the young learn to do the same and build media-use habits that will last for a lifetime.

FOOTNOTES

1. Ben Logan, "They Started the Revolution Without Me," Television Awareness Training - The Viewer's Guide (Media Action Research Center, New York, New York, 1979), p. 8.
2. The New York Times, January 8, 1980, pp. D12.
3. Ellen Togerson, "What Teen-Agers Watch," TV Guide, April 23, 1977, p. 6.
4. Lance Morrow, "Blacks on TV: A Disturbing Image," Time (March 27, 1978), p. 102.
5. Growing with Television: A Study of Biblical Values and the Television Experience, published by Cooperative Publishing Association, available September 1, 1980.

From the perspective of...

Educators

TELEVISION AND TEACHERS: A NEW ALLIANCE

by

Linda Chavez, Editor

and

Trish Gorman, Assistant Editor
American Federation of Teachers

Television has been blamed for a decline in student test scores, an increase in juvenile violence, the corruption of our young people's morals, and just about every other social evil that could beset the youth of our nation. Why, then, is an organization like the American Federation of Teachers, which represents over a half million educators, interested in helping its members bring television into the classroom? It is precisely because television exerts so pervasive an influence on students' lives that we feel we must begin helping teachers shape that influence into a more positive one.

For many teachers, television is the enemy. It keeps their students from completing homework assignments. It teaches their students that "ain't" and "they wuz" and "them guys" are perfectly acceptable figures of speech. It gives them role models that are sometimes crude, inarticulate and physically abusive. But the real danger, it seems, is not that so much of what there is to watch on television is either mediocre or detrimental, but that the young people watching television are often unable to distinguish between which offerings are good and which are bad.

The American Federation of Teachers, however, recognizes that although much of what television has to offer is poor, there are programs that stand out for their high quality or educational benefit. These include ROOTS and its sequel, ROOTS: THE NEXT GENERATION, HOLOCAUST, NBC's SPECIAL TREATS, ABC's AFTERNOON SPECIALS, ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT, 30 MINUTES, the NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SPECIALS and PBS's popular science series NOVA.

Up until a few years ago, one barrier to using television in a constructive manner in the classroom was lack of good advance information on programs. Teachers had to rely almost solely on commercial advertisements for information about specific programs--and it was rarely enough information to enable them to advise students in a meaningful way about what programs might be worth watching. Many teachers also did not have the time or the resources to provide students with background and discussion material following a television presentation.

Recently, however, the concern of parents, educators and the general public over the influence of television on young people has mushroomed. Suddenly, the public is recognizing that television is not only here to stay but is offering disconcerting competition in the classroom and family life. A number of organizations, including the commercial television networks, have launched study guide materials for selected programs or have sponsored projects designed to bring parents, teachers, and youngsters together to take a closer look at the issues raised in television programs. Other organizations, such as Action for Children's Television and the PTA, have attracted national publicity through their campaigns against poor progra ning, TV violence and some children's advertising.

The American Federation of Teachers has also been active in these reas. For the past two years, the AFT has included a television section n its professional journal, *American Educator*. This supplement provides guide for teachers on specific upcoming commercial and public television pro rams, including discussion of themes, background information, suggestion for classroom discussion and a bibliography of additional source materi . We also have carried on a regular basis articles about the medium self, educational projects using television, or new technology such as videod cs.

Through the television supplement, teachers are encouraged to u the articles and study guides not only to stimulate classroom activit s and discussion (including related reading), but to help students becom more discriminating viewers. Teachers not only may discuss with stude s the issues raised by a particular program, but in many cases examine that ogram for dialogue, character and quality of production. In many instances study guide questions will center around the more general aspects of the tel ision medium including advertising, stereotyping and the realistic or unre istic portrayal of characters and events.

There remain, however, gaps in training or assisting teachers in t use of television in the classroom. The critical television viewing kills projects developed by SEDL and others promise to help fill that gap by lving deeper into our television viewing habits and the messages we receive f m the medium. College teacher training programs and government financed in rvice programs at the local level can also do much to help fill that gap.

It is the AFT's intention to assist teachers in working *with* tel ision to expand the educational opportunities and activities of the classro . At the same time, teachers are in a position to reinforce good programs d to present critical analyses of poor programming. By working with pare s and community-based groups, teachers can be a powerful force in pressuri the television industry to abandon some of its worst practices and to work oward more quality programming. If students can be encouraged to use tel ision rather than simply watch it, the medium does not have to be the pervas e and persuasive "anonymous teacher" that it almost certainly will become if it is ignored.

TELEVISION'S ROLE IN THE LEARNING PROCESS CONSIDERATIONS FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

by

Robert L. Olcott
National School Boards Association

and

Dr. David Jonassen
The University of North Carolina

As school board members and other educators develop positions and recommendations on television and its place in the learning process, it seems prudent to consider three basic axioms of the medium.

First, television now enjoys an almost universal presence in the lives of America's school-age population.

Second, viewed as a conduit of information, television is a presentational medium which requires of the receiver (viewer) low levels of participation.

Third, television is a medium with both demonstrated successes and--to a much greater degree--unrealized potential as an educational tool.

That television plays a significant part in the daily lives of America's school-age children is well documented. Indeed, the medium is unprecedented both in universality and use. More than 99% of all U.S. households now have one or more television sets which are in use an average of four-and-one-half hours each day. By the time high school graduation arrives, the average American student has spent more time in front of television than in the classroom. The "tube" has become an accepted surrogate in almost every American family. Ironically, it is this omnipresence that, more than any other factor, has impeded inquiry into television's effect on children. It is indeed difficult to study "before and after" TV when most children already have become purposeful TV viewers by the age of three.

Marshall McLuhan was among the first to speculate on the relationship among different media, the messages they convey and the receivers of those messages. Coining the terms "hot" and "cold" media, McLuhan attempted to view on a continuum the degree of involvement required by the receiver to decode and absorb the message. Television, he postulated, is a "cold" medium in that it requires relatively little attention, cognition and involvement on the part of the viewer.

Social scientists tell us learning results from the interaction of receiving, processing, and recalling information and that it frequently involves higher-level cognitive processes--reasoning and problem solving, for example. This model implies the active participation of the learner. More than any other medium to date, TV interprets, refines and pre-packages information for the viewer. In doing so, it mediates experiences, reducing the mental activity of the viewer to the passive reception of continuously coded information and ideas.

This passivity inherent in the TV viewing experience merits further examination. What effect does inactive absorption have on the social and intellectual development of children? From their observations in the classroom and from hundreds of experiments, teachers and social scientists cite behavioral changes in students which they believe may relate to the healthy doses of TV watching common to most school-age children. Compared with previous generations, they tell us that children today seem to have shorter attention spans and are less persistent than ever before; that children seem more reluctant and have more difficulty affiliating with each other; that except for words and phrases they absorb and parrot back from hours of television watching, children today seem less willing and able to use language to express their thoughts and ideas. With "television" now named students' favorite pastime activity, we can only wonder how generations of young people weaned on television will learn to deal with each other.

Given some validity in these generalized observations, it would seem useful for school officials to consider the nature, causes and subsequent effects of these changes. Clearly, it is easy and convenient to lay blame at the doorstep of commercial television broadcasters. This would seem to be misguided, however. Television is only one of a series of influences on children and only one of a series of factors that influence the learning process. The influence television wields is contingent on other communications reaching the young viewer and on environmental factors outside the penumbra of any one medium.

Nonetheless, the act of watching television places the viewer--the child--in the position of passive receiver rather than in the role of active participant who must produce, process and transmit ideas. Moreover, television viewing is an individual experience and, as such, the long-term behavioral, developmental, and intellectual consequences of long hours of TV viewing must be studied and considered vis-a-vis methods of teaching children, which have changed little in the past three decades. It is indeed understandable when teachers complain of the frustration and difficulty in preparing lesson plans which compete successfully with exciting, rapid-fire visual programming on television.

That television can function successfully as a conduit of information and knowledge has been proven. We only need recall the medium's ability to depict the surrealistic horror of war in Vietnam or the fascination and triumph of man's first step on the moon. Without television's vicarious eye, the quality of these experiences would have suffered greatly.

Clearly, learning can occur from all forms of television: commercial, public, videotaped lessons, etc. Instructional television and educational television are produced for the explicit purpose of stimulating learning, whereas commercial television purportedly entertains us. Learning from the former could be termed intentional learning--that resulting from clearly defined and purposive instructional procedures. Learning from the latter is incidental, serendipitous learning.

The effectiveness of educational/instructional television has been the subject of hundreds of studies since the early 1950's. Most research generally has found few significant differences between televised instruction and traditional classroom instruction, probably because most TV lessons are designed to replicate the effects of a classroom teacher. Not surprisingly, when viewed collectively, research indicates that television alone is insufficient to carry the entire task of teaching; that in combination with other media television is more effective than other instructional media alone; and that programming which encourages active participation by viewers best facilitates learning from television.

It is important to reiterate, however, that television is only one factor in the learning-educational model. Other factors come into play: the developmental stage and personality of the child (viewer), program characteristics such as subject matter, presentation and production techniques and environment-related factors such as viewing conditions.

Believing these concerns and issues merited the attention of local school board members, NSBA President Hiroshi Yamashita in 1979 created an NSBA task force to study "What Should Children be Taught About Critical Television Viewing?" The task force, comprised of local school officials who represent more than a million public school children in 21 states, was charged with examining the role of television in the lives of American students, learning about ways that children perceive what they see on the screen and developing recommendations to aid educators in their efforts to initiate programs designed to increase their students' television IQs.

Specifically, the task force took a close look at a variety of programs and research projects currently underway to help children learn about the television medium and put their viewing experiences into a more informed perspective. From its inquiry and deliberations, NSBA's TV task force identified a number of important points for consideration:

> Public school officials must recognize that television is a significant factor in the lives of American children. It is, moreover, a pervasive influence in the lives of their parents, too, and schools must take this into account. Many parents cannot, or will not, help their children develop critical viewing skills; and oftentimes, the children who need the most help with their television viewing habits are the ones who receive the least amount of assistance or encouragement from their parents.
>
> Television, its effects on children, and the issue of teaching critical viewing skills should be viewed from both short- and long-range perspectives. In the short term, the National School Boards Association should develop clinics at the NSBA conventions to address these issues. NSBA should, in turn, encourage state school boards associations to include similar workshops or clinics at their own annual conventions.
>
> Local television stations should be encouraged by their surrounding communities to carry advertisements that underscore the importance of watching television with a "critical eye." (There currently exist several television public service announcements that show screen personalities explaining the importance of critical

> viewing skills).
>
> The task force encourages NSBA to become actively involved in any legislative initiatives with a potential impact on the television medium. This involvement could take the form of expressions of concern by NSBA, on behalf of school board members nationwide, about the issues of children and television whenever Congress is considering a legislative initiative that could affect the television industry.

In addition to suggesting potential programmatic activity for the association, NSBA's TV task force proposed two resolutions for consideration by the association's policy-making Delegate Assembly:

> NSBA encourages local boards of education to develop programs in their schools to teach critical thinking and critical television viewing skills to our nation's youth. NSBA also urges its member state school boards associations to encourage and support local boards of education in their efforts to teach critical thinking and critical television viewing skills.
>
> NSBA encourages all education-related organizations to join in its effort to work with the television networks, local television stations (both public and commercial), and the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) for improved program content on all local stations.

At the same time, NSBA's task force members felt the need to address their concern over the growing proliferation of violence portrayed on television. Underscoring and strengthening an existing NSBA resolution, the task force proposed for endorsement the following resolution:

> NSBA opposes violence on television and supports projects designed to reduce television violence. In addition, the NSBA encourages local school districts to oppose violence on television. NSBA commends the National Association of Broadcasters and the National Congress of Parents and Teachers for the steps which they have taken to reduce crime and violence during the time when children watch television. NSBA encourages its member school districts to provide for appropriate instruction in classrooms concerning the advantages of fine television.

In their roles as policymakers for America's 15,000 public school systems, locally elected and appointed school board members must consider not only their own opinions and attitudes, but also those held within the community as well. Indeed, the strength of this country's system of public education has been its responsiveness, through locally elected and appointed school boards, to the priorities and needs of individual communities. Where and when television impacts on the behavioral and intellectual development of students, school board members will be involved in weighing this impact and in charting directions for school systems which take this influence into account. By necessity and reason, this process of evaluating television and determining its place in the learning process will differ from one community to the next. So, too, will the outcomes of these determinations vary.

But from the perspective of local control of, and accountability for, public schools, this is the way it should be.

From the perspective of...

Related Government Agencies

THE FAMILY AND TELEVISION:
AN OVERVIEW OF FEDERAL PROGRAMS

by

Carter Collins and Oliver Moles
National Institute of Education

Scope

In this brief paper we take the perspective of the National Institute of Education (NIE) and apply it to four areas. These are: 1) home use of television among low-income and ethnic minority families; 2) ongoing NIE work in the area; 3) the program development, research and regulatory work of other government agencies; and 4) federal legislative activities. We shall be concerned with home rather than institutional viewing of television--particularly information bearing on the family's role in shaping television use, and how television may influence interaction. These concerns arise from the viewpoint of the NIE Families as Educators Team of which we are both members. The Team's mission concerns social processes in the home by which school children learn skills and values. Included is the use of resources such as television in the family's educational activities.

Perspective of the National Institue of Education

The National Institute of Education is a federal research and development agency in the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. As a consequence of its Congressional mandate, NIE is committed to sponsoring studies which lead to improving educational opportunities for all Americans. In keeping with the agency's equity thrust, those groups of individuals whose educational opportunities have been unfairly restricted in the past are of major concern. Out of the vast array of activities which may be utilized to educate America's youth, TV is clearly a tremendous force and a potential medium for achieving educational goals. If the nation's economically disadvantaged, culturally different and female populations are to reap substantial educational benefits from television, it appears that the government and other relevant agencies must take positive, forceful action. If such action is to be intelligent, effective and economical, it must be firmly undergirded with appropriate knowledge. We believe that viewing work on television from the NIE perspective is consonant with broader societal concerns for equalizing educational opportunities.

Television Viewing Among Low-Income and Minority Populations

Research clearly indicates that low-income and cultural minority children spend more hours viewing television than do other groups. In a 1978 paper entitled "Learning About Minorities from Television," Dr. Bradley S. Greenberg and Dr. Charles K. Atkin summarize several years of research about the television viewing behavior of black, Hispanic and Anglo children. The paper relates that in a Cleveland study of 400 9-to-10-year-olds, poor Anglo children reported daily viewing of shows that averaged six hours per day. More well-to-do children in the study reported four hours viewing per day, while poor blacks reported an average of seven hours daily viewing. In a Philadelphia study which compared 300 ghetto and suburban high schoolers the team found that while middle class, Anglo suburban students averaged three-and-one-half hours of Sunday viewing, poor Anglos averaged four-and-one-half and poor blacks averaged six hours. On the basis of their extended studies, Greenberg and Atkins feel that the phenomena reflected in these two cities holds true for the entire nation. Two other significant findings of the research team worth noting are that economically disadvantaged children tend to be non-selective in their viewing, often watching whatever happens to be on, and that low-income children seem to be much more believing about what they see on television.

Although it is often stated that children learn well from educational television without adult guidance, little attention has been focused on the question of how learning could be improved by increasing the adult's role and otherwise strengthening the social environment in which television is viewed.

NIE Funded Projects

Several projects being monitored by members of the NIE Families as Educators Team bear on questions of family interaction around television viewing and/or equalizing educational opportunities. The earliest is Project HOPE (Home-Oriented Preschool Education) which, beginning in 1969, studied the effects of educational television programs beamed to generally low-income rural West Virginia families. Home visitors helped parents use the program material. A long-term follow-up of the children and their families has been conducted by Edward Gotts and will be reported in the near future (Appalachian Educational Laboratory, 1979).

A set of studies directed by Charles Corder-Bolz at the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (1979) has demonstrated that interpetive comments by adults can alter the attitudes of elementary- school-age children toward non-sexist views of occupational and domestic roles for men and women, and away from acceptance of violent behavior portrayed in commonly viewed television programs. Corder-Bolz (1979) is presently testing different methods of collecting data on family interaction during television viewing times.

A third and by far the largest project is "Freestyle," a thirteen-part series on career awareness and sex-role stereotypes. NIE funded the development of the series, which has won several awards, supporting material for school and home viewing use, and an evaluation of the series' impact on the target audience in grades four through six. The series portrays young people from different racial and ethnic groups working and playing together. Black and Hispanic youth also took part in the evaluation. Results will be available soon. A fourth project compares radio and television for their ability to stimulate children's imagination and inferences from incomplete versions of the same unfamiliar stories in the two media (Greenfield, 1979). Anglo and black children from low and middle-income areas are being studied, but family interaction is now included in the design.

Finally, the Teaching and Learning Program of NIE holds an annual research grant competition, and the Families as Educators Team is part of this program. Most recently, one suggested research area was "the way that non-school educational resources and activities are used by families in the home (television, games, teaching devices, books, toys, etc.)..." (NIE, 1979). Proposals are currently under review, and several deal with the family and television usage.

Work of Other Federal Agencies

We have placed into two broad categories the work of other federal agencies in regard to television. These are program development, funding, research and evaluation; and broadcast monitoring and regulation. Brief comments on the mission and recent activities of agencies in each of these categories follow.

Program development, funding, research and evaluation. The Division of Education Technology in the U.S. Office of Education (OE) administers three legislated programs: the Special Projects Act--educational television and radio programming section; Title II Basic Skills Improvement under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; and the Emergency School Aid Act-Educational Television and Radio. Under these authorizations OE has funded such notable programs as SESAME STREET, THE ELECTRIC COMPANY, DIAL A-L-C-O-H-O-L, FOOTSTEPS, QUE PASA U.S.A., VILLA ALLEGRE and CARRASCOLENDA. New works in production include PEOPLE OF THE FIRST LIGHT (on American Indians), SONRISA (bilingual-SPANISH), UP AND COMING on the black family, BEAN SPROUT (on Asian-Americans) and FRANCO FILE (on Franco-Americans). In conjunction with and in support of these programs, OE has sponsored a significant amount of research on characteristics of audiences, school utilization, urban penetration and the impact of various programs on different audiences.

The OE Division of Educational Technology also is supporting four large projects on critical viewing skills. These projects are developing materials and techniques to be used with children and youth from preschool through college age to make them more aware of their viewing habits, use of viewing time, and how portrayals on television match real life situations. Within the next year at least some of these materials will be available for distribution.

The National Science Foundation (NFS) has not been as extensively involved in television programming as the Office of Education, but it has funded some work in the area. A recent notable NSF venture has been the co-funding of a new science series called CONTACT. This is an extremely high quality science series which is multi-ethnic and strongly non-sexist.

The NSF also has a continuing grant program in telecommunications which can include research on television. Under a special program solicitation eight projects were supported on "Policy Related Research on the Social Effects of Broadcast Television." One project dealt with the emotional effects of televised violence on adolescents - black, white, male and female. (Geen, n.d.). Others dealt with the cognitive effects of television advertising on children.

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) through its Division of Extramural Research Programs funds behavioral sciences research including studies on the effects of television on children. Recently supported work includes studies of home viewing among preschoolers, TV and children's conceptions of social reality, modeling of media violence, and social inferences. These studies do not appear to compare ethnic groups nor deal with minorities at all, although social class variables are used in some. The study on conceptions of social reality by Gross is particularly interesting for our purposes because it looks at the family context in terms of beliefs and practices which may mediate the amount of TV watching and its effects.

Although it functions as a quasi-government organization, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) can, for this discussion, be considered along with government agencies. The Corporation came into existence in 1967 as a result of the Public Broadcasting Act. It is funded directly by Congress. Using a broad range of activities, CPB seeks to effectuate a national policy that will make noncommercial radio and television services available to all citizens of the United States. Major activities of the Corporation include underwriting production costs, paying for interconnection services, supporting local station operations, conducting audience research, and professional training. Some of the most notable programs funded totally or in part by CPB are LIVE FROM LINCOLN CENTER, MCNEIL/LEHRER REPORT and CONGRESSIONAL OUTLOOK. Adding to minority-related work of the past like NORTHERN CHEYENNE and BLACK ELK SPEAKS on American Indians, a number of pilot programs are now being evaluated for possible serial production. These include: OYE WILLIE and ULTIMA, both Hispanic bilingual, and the RIGHTEOUS APPLES on blacks. Associated with CPB through various funding, programming and planning links are the Public Broadcasting Service, National Public Radio, and the National Association of Educational Broadcasters.

Broadcast Monitoring and Regulation. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is the most important agency regulating television programs and commercials directed at children. The basic guidelines for the commission's work in this area have been its 1974 Children's Television Report and Policy Statement. ✓

Recently, under prodding from Action for Children's Television and other groups, the Commission has reviewed the industry's compliance with the 1974 policy statement. After an extensive review, a special FCC Task Force concluded that although the industry has done fairly well in complying with the advertisement sections of the 1974 policy, it has been very deficient in the area of children's television programming. In its November 1979 report, the Task Force declared that licensees had failed to carry out the following requests found in the 1974 policy directive:

1. Make a meaningful effort in the area of overall amount of programming for children;
2. Air a reasonable amount of programming for children designed to educate and inform, and not simply to entertain.
3. Air informational programming separately targeted for both preschool children and school-age children; and
4. Air programming for children scheduled during weekdays as well as on weekends.

Using the Task Force Report as its basis, the Commission issued a Notice of Proposed rulemaking in January 1980. Comments are due back to the Commission by June 2, 1980, so it will undoubtedly be many months before the results of the rulemaking process are known.

Since the 1974 guidelines specified that broadcasters should "Provide diversified programming for the child audience, including programming to further the educational and cultural development of children," both the original guidelines and current attempts to strengthen them have special significance for low-income and minority populations.

The other important regulatory agency whose work relates to this paper is the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). Without going into the background of legislative history of the FTC, it will suffice to note the Commission's current activity in the area of advertisements directed toward children. Under its deceptive practices authority, the FTC held hearings in the spring of 1979 to gather information about the impact of advertising on young children. As a consequence of the hearings, the Commission has taken the position that since young children lack the cognitive powers to discern the difference between advertising and program content, advertisements directed toward such young, undeveloped minds constitutes deceptive practices. The commission was especially concerned about the damage to youngsters from watching cereal and other food commercials, a large percentage of which feature sweets and other non-nutritional foods. Consequently, the Commission is considering the issuance of a policy which would require the TV industry to ban all harmful food commercials, include messages reinforcing good dietary habits, or produce and air special nutritional messages.

According to several articles in the Washington Star, (late December 1979) these proposals have generated a great deal of lobbying activity on the part of the food industry, and an adverse posture on the part of some members of Congress. Again, it is too soon to determine what the outcome of this debate will be.

Legislative Activity

A good deal of the Congressional interest in the TV industry has already been addressed through such agencies as the FCC, the FTC, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. But in addition, the House Subcommittee on Communication under the chairmanship of Lionel Van Deerlin has been very busy preparing legislative proposals which would have momentous impact on the entire broadcasting system. After three years of hearings and meetings with a wide variety of groups, the work of the Van Deerlin Committee has culminated in House bill number 3333. Among other provisions, it calls for almost complete deregulation of radio and television broadcasting after a period of ten years, creation of an endowment for program development, a minority ownership investment program, and the levying of scheduled fees for the use of the airwaves. The Senate Subcommittee on Communications is also preparing legislation in the same area, but its scope and dimensions are not nearly as broad as those of the House Committee. Reflective of the Senate Subcommittee's approach is the legislative proposal offered by Senator John Heinz, R-Pa., seeking to establish a National Endowment for Children's Television. Some observers believe that it will be quite some time before either the House or Senate proposals are acted upon.

In addition to the television focused work of the House and Senate, Congress has also included television program development activities in such legislation as the Title I Emergency School Aid Act.

Conclusion

Although not totally comprehensive, this brief look at the involvement of the federal govenment in the area of television and the family indicates that no agency is currently doing much in the area where the Families as Educators Team plans to conduct some activities; namely, family interaction around home use of television among low-income and minority families. Although the U.S. Office of Education and the Corporation for Public Broadcating have developed and continue to promote programs focused on minority populations, very little has been done to examine the role and influence of parents and the home environment on what children learn from television, or how viewing may affect other family activities and interaction. The four Critical Viewing Skills projects sponsored by OE are notable exceptions. We will follow these similar efforts closely to see what implications they have for equity and changes in learning.

As part of our plan to provide national leadership, along with other NIE teams, the Families as Educators Team will seek to stimulate discussion of issues of broad concern relating to the control and utilization of television by parents in the interest of using it as an educational resource with children. A part of our plan is to prepare two more working papers on (a) sources of information and findings on social class and ethnic group differences in family interaction and television impact, and (b) the current state of interventions which might involve parents. These two papers will serve as the basis for a workshop or small conference in the summer of 1980 which will bring together researchers, educators and parents to discuss implications for research. The overall goal of this effort will be to identify and assess techniques which parents might use to make television better serve their own purposes and their children's education.

CRITICAL TELEVISION VIEWING SKILLS

by

Frank B. Withrow
U.S. Office of Education

Philosophers have from the beginning of time asked the question "how does a person know something?" Spinoza postulated that the world was all within each individual's mind and that unless consciousness aroused thoughts in an individual, the event or place did not exist. Interesting as his thoughts were, they do not test out well in a scientific age when we have equipment that extends beyond our own sensory perceptors. Nevertheless, our first knowledge is gained through sensory experiences. The infant tastes, feels, smells, sees and hears his or her world. The brain organizes these sensory perceptions into wholes that become knowledge. The perceptions are tested against past perceptions and future expectations and thus, become knowledge. As the infant grows and his or her awareness expands, words are associated with experiences. Soon, such word symbols stand in the place of the real experience. For example, the mother can soothe the crying baby by speaking to the baby and indicating that the milk is coming. Of course, the delay cannot be too long or the hungry baby begins to cry again. Gradually word symbols do become a part of the infant's experiential life. They become the communication links that allow us to share private experiences publicly.

Because each individual's knowledge is based upon his or her own experiences, complete and total communication is never possible. Each word and each communication is based upon separate perceptions of the person's own private world of experiences. However, the nature of communication is such that people adjust for variancies in perceptions. There is enough of my perception of "red" that is common to your experience that we can understand one another. On the other hand an artist who has developed a wider range of color discriminations than I may find it difficult to communicate with me. From a functional standpoint, daily conversation conveys ideas and experiences. For more precise communications scientists, lawyers, physicians and mathematicians require more exact symbols.

Speech, dance, music, drama and art are all forms of man's expanding ability to communicate. A single thread among these communication modes is that they all compress time and space. They provide the user vicarious experiences of the originator's world without actually being in the same time and space of the event.

Wendel Johnson believed that words and language were only the roadmaps of the real world of experiences. When we forget that words are symbols representing the real world and events within it, we tend to lose our objectivity and eventually may lose touch with reality to the extent that we suffer severe psychological disorientation.

Children of our modern age live in a stimuli-rich, experiential world. Modern communication brings to their fingertips windows upon a world that could not be envisioned by their grandparents. Today, we print at fantastic rates information on every imaginable subject. We broadcast and record events through the world and share them with billions of the world's population. Personal point-to-point communication is possible throughout the world via the telephone system. Technology expands and extends the individual's sensory systems so that they can reach and be reached at distant points. One of the trade-offs in such experiences is that mediators often edit the materials in the process of recording and transmitting them to the user. Obviously, we do not completely replicate the entire sensory aspects of an event, i.e., odors, tastes and tactile information is eliminated. On the other hand, these close sensory systems are not as richly informative as sight and sound.

The child and the adult in our modern world live in an ocean of information-rich experiences that bombard them from all sides. Within all major metropolitan areas a large number of choices are available each week for television viewing. In the Washington, D.C. area there are more than a thousand choices that could be made. True, many of these are reruns of previously broadcast programs; nevertheless the choice is there. From this pool, the average person makes 35 to 50 choices and watches some 30 hours of television per week. The television window is powerful, but it is not a true reflection of the real world. One of its problems is that it so closely duplicates the real world, that it is harder to detect as a symbolic form than books, movies or plays. Television is, in its best sense, a rich information tool, a super entertainment medium, and a political stumping ground for public officials.

> This instrument can teach, it can illuminate; yes, it can even inspire. But it can do so only to the extent that humans are determined to use it to those ends. Otherwise it is merely lights and wires in a box. Edward R. Morrow

U.S. Commissioner of Education Ernest Boyer called for a series of projects designed to make the resources of television more meaningful to learners. He envisioned television users to be capable of discriminating among the programs they watch. The Office of Education's objective in awarding these contracts is to allow students to develop their own criteria, and to understand their own habits and uses of television.

Critical television viewing skills enable an individual to make judicious uses of television as an information source and as an entertainment form. Such skills include both knowledge and activities. All television viewers should have:

1. a knowledge of the special effects of television production. TV is both more and less than real life. Time and space are significantly compressed in television productions.

2. a knowledge of the social trade-offs involved in television viewing. Excessive television viewing can affect mental health. Things are left undone as a result of habitual viewing. TV viewing is essentially passive as opposed to other activities that often require participation.

3. a knowledge of commercial influences on television and the motivating factors involved in commercial support of television. The value systems portrayed on television may not be acceptable to all people because production is directed to the largest possible audience.

4. a knowledge of individual and group patterns of viewing. A knowledge of one's own individual viewing habits is necessary. A knowledge of the patterns of individual age groups and their importance in the television market place will also enhance understanding.

5. an ability to recognize information and to differentiate between information and propaganda. Commercial advertisements frequently carry information, but they are also designed to project the information in the most attractive and subtle manner. Viewers need to recognize the role of humor, sex, and the bizarre in the advertisement's seduction of the consumer.

6. an ability to understand and evaluate opposing views on news and documentary programs. An understanding that time constraints of television news programs limit indepth reporting is important. Usually there is an effort to provide editorial balance, therefore different commentators may have strongly different ideas and perceptions.

7. an ability to understand the differences between written and television drama. How does a book differ from a drama on television? What are the underlying principles in building a good story on television? How does a television presentation differ from the stage and film story? Television is a little window on the world; whereas the stage and film provide a large landscape for vicarious experiences.

8. an ability to understand one's own uses of television. Why do you watch television? What do you get out of it? Is it a diversion from the busy schedule? Do you use it as a source or a sampler to stimulate you to a deeper study of a specific issue? Is it your main source of information outside your own experience?

9. an ability to understand the consumer's role in television. How can you influence what's on television? What is your place in community-based television?

The USOE projects to encourage critical TV viewing skills were divided into age groups. At the elementary level, young elementary-aged children can and should learn that television distorts the real world. They can at early ages test the television world against the real world. With parental guidance they can use television wisely. The family, the school and youth-serving agencies can make television viewing more responsive to the needs of a growing child.

At the middle school level, which encompasses the upper elementary levels and junior high school, children can be self-motivated in establishing priorities on the quality and quantity of their television viewing. They are interested in how television is put together. How do the producers make the "Six Million Dollar Man" jump tall buildings? They want to know how an idea is formed for a show and how it gets put into the dramatization that is shown in their home. They are interested in some of the major issues in television. Should children's advertisements be limited? What are ratings and how do they affect the program schedule? They like to critique programs.

At the secondary level, the high-school-aged youngster is sensitive to alternatives to telvision watching. This age range is the least likely group to watch television. They are involved with a number of social and sports activities as well as the demands of their school and work lives. They are in a position to begin to analyze television and to make judgments that will affect their habitual use of television. They can understand and explore in more detail the wide range of potential dramatic programs. They are capable of analyzing different opinions and viewpoints in news and special events programs. In effect, they can be sophisticated users of television. They can understand the ratings systems and the commercial impetus behind the television industry. They are aware of (and can be taught to understand) the political-social aspects of television.

The post-secondary educational program is directed towards an understanding of one's own use of television and the importance adults play in monitoring children's use of television. Emphasis is placed on the societal-family interplay with television. What dos it mean as a social event when more than 100,000,000 people watch ROOTS? Does it lead to a further study by the viewers of the issues involved? There are interesting indicators such as an increased sale of the books, increased interest in tracing one's own roots, and a spin-off of reading in related areas which resulted from the showing of ROOTS. The post-secondary materials deal with some of the limitations of news programs, propaganda, psychological impact of television programs and the prosocial effects of dramatic series, soap operas and talk shows.

The U.S. Office of Education is only one among a number of agencies concerned with television and education. There are those who are concerned with the content of the programs and make specific recommendations for viewing. Others have developed parent activities and have held neighborhood workshops to train parents in viewing or controlling the television viewing of their children. The U.S. Office of Education critical TV viewing projects have been designed to provide a nonbiased approach to the development of skills which will allow the individual to monitor his or her own television viewing habits. Television is the common denominator in America. It is the most persistent and pervasive single element in American life. It consumes more time and attention than any other single activity within our lives. It exceeds the influence and time spent in school, at church and on the job for many people. It is an important influence that cannot be left to chance. It can be mastered by individuals and it can be the resource that Edward R. Murrow indicated. Or it can become the wasteland described by Newton Minnow, former chairman of the FCC. Today, television has neither lived up to its best promises nor sunk to the depths of its worst critics. A partnership between schools and the television industry can and will enable us to reach the best in television.

Its capacity is there, its utilization is there--it is up to us to make television work for our best interests.

From the perspective of...

Representatives of the TV Industry

WHAT THE TV INDUSTRY IS DOING TO HELP YOUTH

by

Jack Blessington, Director, Educational Relations
CBS Television Network

This topic almost demands a list which would suggest that the television industry is doing a lot to help the youth of this country and the world. Perhaps the suggestion of Dr. Wilbur Schramm ought to be used to set the direction, "I suggest that you do not think in terms of what television does to children, but rather, what do children do with television?" Therefore, perhaps it is useful to consider what youth does with television before we list what TV does to help them.

It seems that television is used by youth to entertain and inform them. They toy with it; it is mass culture; it is humor; it is small talk; it is "Did ya see...the other night?; it is social, isolating, recreational, but most of all - it simply IS. Television IS. That means it exists for today's American youth in a way foreign to those born before TV was a common resource.

Television in a minor way is an employer of youth, but only a few of the vast number who need employment. Therefore, that is not enough help. What does it do to help them on a loftier plane? Television is a developer of human potential; it helps us to know.

Television is a vast transmitter of knowledge. It is one of youth's major informers. About what? About almost everything. It presents people, places and things. It presents foreign nations and common culture. It presents the arts, the sciences and the current issues of American and international life. It presents sports options, sports heroes and Olympic contests. It presents local, national and international news daily. It presents drama, humor, music, and song, together with dance, photography, movies and documentaries. Television is journalistic, entertaining, and enriching; it is at the same time recreational, silly and playful. Youth, therefore, has access to all the educational potential that television offers.

Television as an industry does not set out to help youth as a primary goal. As a commercial industry it operates within the framework of most responsible businesses in America and cares about its employees and customers. Television does not exist outside of cultural or political realities but rather works within the context of a commercial industry. Commercial television is not, for example, educational television; it is not public broadcasting and it is not instructional television. While commercial television is all these in some manner, these entities are not the center of its life as an industry.

In looking back at the formative years of television which took place in America in the fifties, it seems the huge black and white consoles of the day were scarcely out of their packing cases before the naysayers descended. It would be several years until Newton Minnow would make his famous "vast wasteland" speech. But already, in 1959, it had become necessary for people such as Dr. Schramm to refute the myth that television was the primary cause of everything from the Crimean War to a growing lack of confidence in the "Easter Bunny."

Today, television still has more than its fair share of detractors. This is especially true in the area of television's effect on children. Until someone can come forward with documentation that proves otherwise, I as an educator suggest television is not anywhere near being the primary problem with today's younsters. Even if we were to throw every television set in America out the window, we would still have the major problems of poverty, mobility, value changes and changes in family life as well as political, racial and group tensions. Not only can television not be blamed for these major and evolutionary changes but, on the contrary, television can be credited with assisting us to recognize and manage the changes that swirl around us.

There are those who choose to believe that reading and literacy among young people were much more in evidence prior to the advent of television. Margaret Meade didn't agree with this assessment. She said in a 1973 Washington, D.C. speech to educators that many people like to believe everyone sat around the table after dinner and had a wonderful conversation before the advent of television. She suggested that this was another myth in the making; there is no evidence to support the belief. (Annual Conference, National Association for Independent Schools, Spring 1973).

Rudolph Flesch also disagrees, "As I see it, children who are not taught to read in school at least learn a lot of things from TV. They enlarge their vocabulary and collect an unbelievable amount of information. Beside it's sheer fantasy to think that if kids didn't watch TV they'd spend all those hours engrossed in good books." ("Why Johnny Still Can't Read," Family Circle, November 1, 1979).

The recent and very constructive Ford study on adult illiteracy in the United States relates the problem clearly to the problems of poverty. It found that the social and economic structures of dominance, perpetuated in the schools, make it hard for many to learn. "In this country persons with limited education are often the same persons who suffer one or more of the major social disadvantages--poverty, unemployment, racial or ethnic discrimination, social isolation." (Adult Illiteracy in the United States, A Report to the Ford Foundation, St. John Hunter and David Harman, McGraw Hill, 1979). Those of us who have been in education for a long time know that it is poverty and not television that is the major culprit in the fight to overcome ignorance.

The problems and needs of youth are as many today as they have been throughout human history. There are unique problems waiting in the wings in the 1980's, just as there have always been problems throughout history which deserve the term "unique." Today's youth have to deal with energy problems, pollution, new styles of family life, longer life spans, longer and more compulsory formal education, the lessening of the dignity of manual labor, nuclear weapons, and the like.

Television provides youth with information about their world and, at times, the constructive advice of its elders for managing today's adversities. The problems of drugs and alcohol abuse are readily discussed along with information about biological sexuality and the affective nature of human relationships. Television presents the art, music, language, geography, politics and general culture of people in diverse parts of the world. This video encyclopedia helps our youth to know the world in less parochial terms than they might otherwise experience. This is essential learning for twentieth century life.

Television also presents many dramatic shows that help youth to look critically at prejudice, unreasonable anger, intolerance and impatience. From time to time, television also pokes fun at itself and this can help youth to view all media with a degree of healthy and respectful suspicion.

Television, it ought to be remembered, fits into a social setting and meets youth on the same road where youth meets the rest of life. The automobile, Concorde jet, computers, wonder drugs, synthetic fibers, laser technology, the miracles of science, the depth of religious faith and the profound realities of man's philosophies co-exist with television. Electronic music, vitamin pills and gerontology along with over-crowded schools and a lack of proper housing are all in the same world of youth. What is television doing for these aspects of the lives of youth--is that what we want to know?

Or is there a hidden statement? "Kids watch a lot of television, perhaps too much, and what is TV doing to make sure that this generation does not arrive at their maturity in a state of diminished capacity?" As an educator, I entered the field of television because I think, as a technology and a industry, it is a great gift to twentieth century man. Put another way, it is twentieth century man's gift to himself. It is certainly the gifted inheritance of our human history and creative efforts and it is unmistakably a twentieth century benchmark.

Insofar as youth is concerned, the television industry is rather innocent. When people were initially excited about transmitting a video signal, it is fair to guess they did not say, "What will this do for youth?" It is also fair to suggest that when television became the follow-up to the radio broadcasting industry it did not ask itself, "Will this help the youth of the world?" It just moved out into that era and dealt with man unsegregated by age categories. The view of youth and television needs a broader context, and together with Dr. Schramm, I think we can only approach it by asking: "How does youth experience television?"

As a former headmaster of two schools and the father of three college-age students, I know that schooling, as I viewed it for youth and the way they experienced it, was vastly different. When my own children gather with friends to discuss their schooling, under my administration, I hardly recognize the institution, let alone the events. Schooling for school-age youth is very different from schooling for their headmasters, professors or parents. The often-studied television experiences of youth are, in my opinion, largely flawed. These studies attempt to tap the minds of the young, but the mind is difficult to examine, no matter how scientific and disciplined we are in our research.

Television, as environment, therefore, is different from television studied. Television is within the world of young people, and their uses of it vary greatly. The intellectual, spiritual, psychic, moral and social development of youth as affected by television is worthy of study. But it is also very difficult to isolate this aspect of its reality. Youth is, after all, a part of the social system of parents, family, neighborhood, religion, school, diet, genetics, social class, race, general provincial culture, random chance and whatever else you can think of as an atmosphere.

To address and answer the initial topic of the television industry, I will say the curriculum of commercial television is vast and helpful. I know television is only a part of our culture, and although seemingly ever-present, it has only a relative effect on any one human. From my experiences, I believe television is a rather positive force for almost all youth.

While I wish to respect the concerns of parents and teachers regarding the potential distraction television may present to some children, it is not realistic to wish television would disappear. Television is not only here to stay, but commercial television is striving to be even more responsive and useful to both the educational and family life needs of the society. But commercial television is not instructional television. It enriches, but is not a school.

Simply stated, I think the television industry helps youth by supplying them with vast amounts of information for knowing their world and dealing with it. The entertaining and fictional aspects of some of this information are easily processed by today's children--a generation born into television society. They turn it into recreation. When it is fictional they know it is a contradiction to the other realities of their experience. They are at ease with television.

What the TV industry is doing to help youth opens up the whole area of what TV does for people in general. This is not the topic, but I would feel it incomplete if I did not touch upon this broader topic. Almost every aspect of life is presented on television. Life and death, miracle medicine and malpractice, viture and fraud in business, saints and sinners, heroes and villains, objective truths and fictions, the arts, the sciences, the faith and the doubt are all presented. We lose our innocence when we lose our ignorance; we also lose our prejudices. We lose our security as we see the world televised from the moon or from Iran, but we gain the brotherhood of man, the commonness of our fears, and ways to cope. At the same time we are led to see the global, we see the microscopic--the small and sensitive aspects of our universe.

A peek at other people's families and their ways of dealing with stresses and burdens enables us to sense our own varied resources. We see and hear the symptoms of life's problems and we can recognize them more rapidly and respond more readily.

Television is obviously something man can deal with because for over thirty years he has been watching it joyfully. It has increased our memory, made greater and yet more common a world culture, it has joined us together with the horrors of wars and the joys of temporary peace. And we keep creating newer and more intriguing variations of our video capacity.

Our eyes are exercised by television to track multiactivities and our senses reach out to the artistic, creative, and playful aspects of this modern medium.

Television is everyone's hometown newspaper, modern classroom, local Bijou theatre, voyeur's window, backyard fence, window on the world, UNESCO lecture and curious twentieth century phenomenon. It is a friendly voice for some and an intruder for others but for most people, youth included, it is simply an informative and entertaining system of communication.

In a more immediate and school-related sense, there is every indication that each of the networks has advanced greatly from the initial phase of simply transmitting signals. Programming such as CBS's CAPTAIN KANGAROO, 30 MINUTES, and THE CBS AFTERNOON PLAYHOUSE; ABC's AFTER SCHOOL SPECIALS, and NBC's HOT HERO SANDWICH and SPECIAL TREAT are but a few of the many excellent hours of broadcasting geared to entertaining and educating today's youth. In addition, commercial television is offering more special news segments and full-length news programs specifically designed to bring international, national and local events into perspective for young people. Local stations have joined in or led in this direction.

And all three networks are actively involved in bringing instructional guides for teachers into thousands of classrooms around the country. At CBS we have three ongoing projects designed to utilize regular network programming to help improve students' reading skills. The CBS Television Reading Program is a nationwide television script-reading project that uses children's enthusiasm for television to help increase their motivation for further reading, learning and creative thinking.

As participants in the Reading Program (grades 4 through 12, depending on the subject matter of the particular broadcast), the students receive matched-to-broadcast scripts several weeks prior to the actual broadcast. The students work with the scripts in the classroom, often taking turns reading the various roles out loud. Their teachers also receive comprehensive Enrichment Guides which are used to initiate classroom discussions and involve the students in a variety of additional reading, writing and creative projects stemming from their work with the scripts. In the Reading Program, individual CBS-affiliated stations work with local educators, newspapers and community-minded corporations in printing and distributing scripts to students. The scripts are also reproduced in the regular run of a number of major newspapers around the country in an effort to extend the script-reading to the entire community.

Since its inception three years ago, the Reading Program has already reached over 6,000,000 students. We think this helps our youth learn from television. More recently, CBS established the CBS Library of Congress "Read More About It" book project and the "The CBS Library Series." "Read More About It" is designed to encourage the public to read books by providing a bibliography on air after the program and sending lists to libraries comprised of titles related to specially selected CBS broadcasts. "The CBS Library Series" is a series of special children's broadcasts which feature dramatizations of classic and contemporary books. All titles are chosen from the Library of Congress' annual list of recommended children's books. At the end of each broadcast, the program's host suggests to the children that they visit their local library and read the books from which the program's story was adapted.

The CBS Television Reading Program, the CBS/Library of Congress "Read More About It" book projects and "The CBS Library Series" are each a step forward in forging a new alliance between television and education. We think this helps young people and adults to learn while they are being entertained.

And what does the future hold? As more programs and projects of an educational nature are developed, as more broadcast research grants are forthcoming from foundations and the broadcasting industry itself, our youth learn more about the TV industry. And as more high schools, colleges and graduate schools provide both theoretical and hands-on courses in the art of creating television programming, the term "television" will no longer be some ethereal mystery to America's youth and the industry will take another leap forward.

And then there's the electronics technology of the future. In the 1970's, television technology made more advancements in ten years than it had in the previous three decades combined. The 1980's will witness even more astonishing advancements. With the advent of the video disk and the continuing proliferation of cable and video cassette programming, the youth of American will have no choice but to become more varied in their viewing and uses of television. We are on the threshold of building a nation of more aware, more informed viewers.

The facts show that, despite its own youthfulness, the televison industry is helping today's youth to know more about the world than any previous generation in human history.

CHILDREN, EDUCATION, AND TELEVISION

by

Grace Cavalieri, Assistant Director
Public Broadcasting Service

Television is the greatest educator of the young in America today. Children spend as much time watching television as they do sleeping. Television has replaced the school and the family as primary sources of information and as enculturators of values. There is no greater influence upon our children today than television. Assembled sociological studies reveal television to be the most pervasive force in our society. With this phenomenal potential the question is posed, how can we justify that so little time, energy and resources are devoted to children's programming?

Telecommunications can create a new definition for children's programming, not only by getting children ready for school and aiding in the transformation of information between school and home, but in helping children learn what schools can never teach them. Knowledge is transportable via television; and new directions for the television industry offer a greater variety of programs with more varied information to different age groups, eventually eliminating the isolation of children's programming altogether.

Our future course of action is to work for an enlightened definition of children's programming. Children's programming must be removed from the time and production ghettos. This is to say that children's programming should incorporate all aspects of program categories: arts and humanities, current affairs, physical sciences, psychological development, etc.

We encourage new concepts for children: children's news, literary works of substance, reality-based dramas, life experience options, the experimental, the avant garde, ballet, opera...every kind of program which exists for adults should exist for children. Children have the widest, most unimbedded view of the world, and presently they are afforded a very narrow view via television.

Through our programming activities at PBS we hope to establish clearer attitudes regarding children and the treatment of children. A good deal must be recognized in children's lack of power, economically and politically. This means children depend upon us in education to address their needs. We call for clarity of vision and intensity of purpose for the future. Only with increased consciousness can new underwriting possibilities be developed. When the public is enlightened, writers and producers will be attracted to children's programming, and more investors will be encouraged to enter in. Policy-makers must be alerted to working for children before changes can be made.

Of great interest to educators and other humanists are the factors which change human behavior. We know media involvement can be considered an activity to develop skills and intelligence. Since television presents methods of transferring values and knowledge, we propose changes for children which are social, artistic, and physical, as well as intellectual and emotional. With a new dignity to children's programming, there is much to indicate self respect for children and opportunities for children to better master their environments.

In addition to significant new program material, it is suggested we in public broadcasting make better uses of resources now available. For instance, the COUSTEAU SPECIALS for PBS could be rewritten for children--same basic visual content, but a different script. NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC shows also could be re-packaged.

The formation of new trends in children's programming calls for research into "media behavior." Studies will be inaugurated into "how" and "why" children learn. CPB is already in the process of advancing studies examining learning and behavioral modes. This is the year for investigation; this is the time in education when we focus upon the child's capacity to experience and respond to media. A whole new view of children's activities must be studied and understood since media is now part of the learning life process for children in America.

American television has dedicated itself only in part to human potential and human concerns. It has not addressed itself fully to children's consciousness and sensibilities. We hope children will participate in important activities which will change them. We have taught with resolution and insistence. We now seek even more ways of reaching children to present a living experience which implies positive values within an episode of the educational experience.

It is our place to establish new procedures for dynamic responses to television program proposals. To do this, we must establish fresh evaluative criteria for energetic programming.

Objectives for Children's Programming

1. To address the total person in the child, thinking, feelings, intuition, and senses.

The integrated person has these four elements balanced, creating a unified view of the world. In education, we have concentrated upon the thinking part of the child's psyche. As psychology became a more exact art, our programming and curricula included affective as well as cognitive material. The feelings of a youngster were dignified enough to be regarded as important factors in using information and relating to the world with that information. The senses were saved for those youngsters who could be funneled into the art world; and intuition was an aspect of literature courses, and then only if courses were conducted by enlightened teachers. If not, the intuitive world was one where educators would rather not be called upon for comment; the intuitive element of the personality was repudiated and denied. Yet our intuitive abilities are the very places where leaps are made from what is known to what is inferred and implied. The intuitive is as respectable a thinking process as deductive or inductive reasoning.

It is incumbent upon us, in education, in the arts, in telecommunications, to investigate and understand all things which make us human and which make us learn, and then to replicate this in situations which are readily identifiable so that as young people move through this world, our televised images of them match their realities. What exists now is often the very opposite. Many times television constructs inhuman, idealized and artificial environments which our young people try to find, and failing, experience a clash in their validation of themselves in the real world.

2. The production of programming which will better prepare the child for understanding and penetrating the environment.

Our very purpose in transmitting messages is to allow children to know more about how it feels to be alive. As we select symbols to transmit, we are making value judgments. The selection of language and numerical symbols (a la SESAME STREET) is the stamp of adult approval that children should value the written language and the world of numbers. They get that message along with the phonetics and the numerical combinations. The approved method for functioning in this society is to be literate and to be equipped with information and skills. It is therefore possible to transmit additional information. It is possible in the world of the future to convey messages and symbols which assist children not only in interpreting their environment and communicating interpretations, but also in finding what satisfies them in the process. We have produced enough credentialed people in this world by way of educational systems. We now seek the symbols in order to aid individuals in finding fulfillment, as well as knowledge and information.

3. The transcendence of the familiar, the cliches and the stereotypes.

It is our hope that television will attract the greatest creators in our society to see the medium as an arena for the new, the untried, the fresh view. Because the medium is relatively young, we haven't an historical context for the creative process via visual electronics. We do know that the very elements of theater which have kept people in their seats for centuries are not always utilized in the theatrical event before the camera. In short, the known methods for relaying human conditions should be allowed room for experimentation in television presentations. Certainly we realize that truth lies at the heart of every cliche. But not to look beyond what already exists in character, situation, and story is to circumscribe "the child's world" and to censor possibilities.

4. The development of models for children.

Studies present us with comprehensive information regarding how television affects the beliefs and the behavior of young persons. Psychologist George Comstock, to name one authority, offers findings which reveal that the viewing experience itself is an addition to the life of the young person. This says that television adds a dimension to one's life. If this dimension is to liberate, to open doors, to set us free, we must see individuals via television who have achieved their lives or who are engaged in a struggle for freedom: intellectual, political, economic, spiritual.

5. The illustration of values of ingenuity and inventiveness in human problem solving.

Alternative systems of thought no longer leave room for the "right" or "wrong" mentality in problem solving. This speaks of the methods by which we attempt to unravel the problem. New computer learning, interestingly, rewards the youngster for more kinds of thought processes than we've ever noted before in the history of the classroom. Certainly some information is exact and unyielding, but we are addressing not what we find, but the ways that we find it. How we proceed in our lives is often connected to our desire to proceed at all. Process is now as important as product. In education and now in televised learning, we do not think only in terms of arriving at conclusions but rather the manners and modes of transportation, as well.

6. The creation of integrated experience where children in America are seen as part of an historical fabric in the entire world community.

A world global village can be created by telecommunications. American youngsters will be communicating with other youngsters with the assistance of the satellite signal. Simple decoders on our roof tops will allow satellite signals to come right into the home. Educational programming and children's programming must respond to the need to provide a context which is national while not chauvinistic. The concentric circles which represent the home, neighborhood, community, state, nation, now widen to include the world.

The child in our society must be afforded the opportunity to see herself or himself as part of the whole. This is orientation in the world. It provides a perspective to the world.

7. The values of social tradition and ritual as dramatized in human affairs.

Unless we see the universal appeal of television as capable of nourishing all levels of human behavior, we are irresponsible. Ritual and tradition have provided icons within each civilization since ancient times. Myth is the foundation for story in our culture. Where our young are today, in our culture, must be shown always in light of man's constant journey. Because television has the ability to disconnect images, the responsibility also is ours to make connections. It is essential that television present continuity and thereby offer "the present" in terms of "the past."

8. Certain realities made available so that youngsters can have better recognition of themselves in the world.

The rights of children as set forth in the United States Declaration of Children's Rights should be evidenced in all programming for children. These rights include, "the right to receive education and special care if the child has a physical or mental handicap"; "the right to grow in an environment of love and security"; "the right to receive free and compulsory education, at least in the elementary stages, which will allow him under equal opportunities to develop his skills and his senses of moral and social responsibility."

9. The creation of works of art for children which have unity, intensity, and beauty.

That which appeals to the senses, aesthetically, and to the mind, intellectually, creates a kind of appetite. It is a kind of pleasure which constitutes desire and motivation to see more. Because of the electronic explosion of television hardware and the lag in television software, the creation of programming must aspire to the standards of excellence and achievement which have always merited the term, "work of art." We call for cognizance of the elements which constitute "works of art" so that programming for children can qualify.

10. The instillation of values, transmission of knowledge, development of the intelligence geared toward mastery of one's environment.

All programming which is offered to children should stimulate the mind even to the point of providing moments of revelation. This applies to the simplest transfer of information as well as to the most complicated matters of human behavior. The common goal is to provide what we know to our children so that the world can be seen as a friendly place, a place wich welcomes and rewards our endeavors. This is the legacy to children which educators in an age of telecommunications can give.

Considerations for the broadcaster and the educator include, first, the role of mass media in a democratic society, but more importantly, the way television enlarges the world. We ask, "What patterns emerge which serve the child's life? Since television is the background hum of a child's existence, how can it expand to create more possibilities--so that growing up can occur with less intellectual wreckage and less emotional hazard? What meanings do we seek through television? What definitions of the individual and her or his interrelationships do we, in education, seek to foster via television? What is the greatest contribution educators and other humanists wish to make, now that our messages can be received by 100 percent of our nation's people?"

Never before has there been such a challenge for cooperation between theorists, scientists, message-makers and educators. If television is seen as a metaphor, then for what conditions is it a metaphor? What is its relationship to our lives? Can it be a metaphor for human growth and expanded consciousness instead of a mirror of human passivity and manipulation? It is from such questions that we now proceed.

SEVEN THINGS PEOPLE WANT TO KNOW ABOUT CHILDREN'S TELEVISION

by

Roy Danish, Director
National Association of Broadcasters

When children and television are discussed together, there are any number of conflicting reactions, questions and observations. While some call television for children "brain-dulling and trivial," others see it as "eye-opening and educational." It has been variously termed "exploitative, inspiring, desensitizing, entertaining..." The contradiction and confusion goes on and on.

To help bring the subject into clearer focus, in this paper we will cite research and background information organized as (necessarily brief) responses to these seven basic questions about children's television:

1. Is there enough good television for children?
2. Are there enough age-specific shows? Are non age-specific shows necessarily useless or inappropriate?
3. Is there creativity and innovation in children's television?
4. Are broadcasters concerned only with ratings?
5. Does television create passivity?
6. Is children's television the broadcasters' responsibility alone? What responsibility do parents and educators have?
7. What are broadcasters doing to help viewers (of all ages) utilize television's educational value?

Is There Enough Good Television for Children?

Most people are unaware of the progress which has been made in the area of children's programming. These changes have not come about by chance. Careful consideration and lots of hard work by many creative people have built the solid base of quality children's programs aired on the schedules today.

At the present time, each network presents worthwhile, non-animated programs for children on a regularly scheduled basis. In addition, each has a Saturday morning line-up of animated comedy and adventure series. ABC's AFTERSCHOOL and WEEKEND SPECIALS, CBS's CAPTAIN KANGAROO and 30 MINUTES, and NBC's HOT HERO SANDWICH and SPECIAL TREAT have all been recognized as high quality children's programming. Sunday morning has enriching programs also, such as ANIMALS, ANIMALS, ANIMALS, and KIDS ARE PEOPLE, TOO.

Outstanding local and syndicated children's series are being produced and aired all over the country. Just a few examples of non-network shows that are carried widely are: the award-winning HOT FUDGE series produced by ABC's WXYZ-TV, Detroit; NBC's WHITNEY AND THE ROBOT from KNBC, Los Angeles; and CBS's WHEN I GROW UP from KMOX-TV, St. Louis.

Other excellent syndicated programs for children include the Emmy-award-winning BIG BLUE MARBLE, THE BODY WORKS, and UNICORN TALES, which are being shown all around the country. In addition, in community after community, there are local programs produced for local audiences with special appeal for the young people of the respective areas. Federal Communications Commissioner Abbott Washburn, in a statement to the Commission in December 1979, cited 41 programs in a partial list of series produced by local stations.

Aside from regularly scheduled network, local and syndicated programs, there are many specials of particular interest to young people. Commissioner Washburn, in his statement to the FCC on the notice of proposed rulemaking for children's television programming, cited these examples among others: READING, WRITING AND REEFER, an NBC News documentary on the use of marijuana; CRY FOR HELP, an ABC drama dealing with the problem of teenage suicide; JOEY AND REDHAWK, a CBS story of friends from different backgrounds who learn to cope with society's prejudices. His partial list included nineteen specials from commercial networks and six from PBS.

Because the educational merit of public broadcasting stations is commonly accepted, we needn't list in this limited space the many commendable programs which they provide. It is important to note, however, that PBS continues to expand its service to children with the recent addition of 3-2-1-CONTACT. This science series is both entertaining and informative, a combination that commercial broadcasters agree is educationally effective.

Are There Enough Age-Specific Shows? Are Non-Age-Specific Shows Necessarily Useless or Inappropriate?

Many children's programs are targeted to a particular age group. Most of Saturday morning's line-up of animated comedy and adventure series are for younger children because they tend to get up earlier than older children. The ABC AFTERSCHOOL SPECIALS and NBC SPECIAL TREATS are directed more toward the junior-high-school-age youngster. The veteran programs CAPTAIN KANGAROO and ROMPER ROOM are primarily for preschool children.

On the other hand, some programs have a broader range of appeal. Although most of the cast in HOT HERO SANDWICH is high-school age and the program is directed chiefly to adolescents, some of the musical/animated portions of the program appeal to much younger viewers. Because the program deals with the universal, non-age-specific topic of growing up, this overlap is intentional.

Other programs, although not specifically designed for children, can be beneficial to them--especially if they watch with a parent or other adult who is willing to discuss the program with them. When programs with adult orientation not suitable for young viewers are scheduled, networks use the "parental discretion" advisory to inform parents of that fact.

According to FCC Commissioner Abbott Washburn, distinguishing a program as "instructional" and categorizing it as an age-specific program designed for children does not insure that such a program is better than entertainment programs designed for family viewing. In his December 1979 statement to the FCC, Washburn commented, "The series, THE WALTONS and LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE, are basically entertainment programs for the whole family. Nevertheless, they teach millions of children each week fundamental truths about human relations and the essential character of the American people." He went on to say, "My own experience with TV and children--based on watching and discussing thousands of hours with our daughter and her friends from 1967 to the present--is that there is a vast amount of programming now available from which children can learn. It is a question of selection, rather than scarcity."

Is There Creativity and Innovation in Children's Television?

Some critics of television have charged that the medium itself hasn't changed and it's basically "the same old stuff over and over." This is just not true. The days have longed passed when mindless cartoons represented much of what was available to children. There are not only more and better programs for children than ever before, but new formats and approaches. Even in the animated programs, there is more concern for positive role models and for presenting pro-social values and themes. Racial and minority stereotypes have been eliminated and physical violence has been greatly reduced. There is still plenty of action, but the monsters are gone and the good guys and gals use brains rather than brawn to trap villains, and nobody gets hurt.

Another clearly noticeable change has been the elimination of yesteryear's larger-than-life hero. In recent years, schedules have included more live-action programs and fewer animated shows. This is not to say that animated cartoons are considered undesirable; on the contrary, animation is appropriate and delightful for many programs and indispensable for some as an element for conveying information and getting across a point with visual effectiveness, i.e., SCHOOLHOUSE ROCK and FAT ALBERT. However, program directors have given greater attention to a balance between the fantasy of animation and the reality of live action.

New themes such as ecology, energy conservation, first aid, brotherhood, obedience to the law, self-understanding, as well as social and political issues of the day and current events have been made an important part of programs--a challenge met by the creative departments and script writers.

In addition to changes within traditional program types, innovative new formats have been devised. Informative drop-in mini-programs such as IN THE NEWS, SCHOOLHOUSE ROCK, and TIME OUT have been added to the schedules. Special public service announcements provide nutrition information. And spots on how to watch television help to put TV viewing in the proper perspective. To point up the difference between program material and advertising, broadcasters have developed special "separators"--a creative response to a perceived need.

Another innovation in the works is NBC's just-announced PROJECT PEACOCK, a regular series of children's specials during prime time, scheduled to begin in 1981. The programs will deal with literature, the arts, music, science, and nature. They will be designed for children under 12 years of age but should be enjoyed by adults as well.

Are Broadcasters Concerned Only With Ratings?

The content of children's programs is a very important concern of broadcasters. Outside panels of professional consultants review programs, sometimes while they are still in the developmental stages. These panels provide the auxiliary support the networks seek for the success of their children's programming efforts.

NBC has a Social Science Advisory Panel which is composed of, among others, a social psychologist, a child development specialist, and an educator. The Bank Street College of Education serves as ABC's overall consultant. In addition, specialists from various areas are consulted on certain projects. At CBS, Dr. Gordon Berry of UCLA heads up a group of individuals chosen for their expertise in particular fields. From the beginning, these advisors work with program creators reviewing ideas, concepts, scripts, film footage, counseling producers, writers and directors on how to introduce pro-social elements and how to avoid negative overtones.

At each network a broadcast standards department operates separately from the programming and advertising departments to decide on the suitability of program content. Each network has policies to improve and increase the value of children's programs.

On an industry-wide level, the National Association of Broadcasters has a Television Code which sets goals and guidelines for children's programming and advertising. Broadcasters voluntarily subscribe to the Code which states in part: "Programs designed primarily for children should take into account the range of interests and needs of children and should include positive sets of values which allow the child to become a responsible adult." Responsible broadcasters agree that children as viewers deserve special attention and consideration. Children make distinctions differently from adults and have different perceptions of the world. Broadcasters continue their efforts to improve their service and find new ways to reach and interest children.

Does Television Create Passivity?

Studies about the effects of television in the area of violence and passivity are basically inconclusive. The ambiguous findings that all studies seem to report are well summed up by the 1961 landmark study of Schramm, Lyle and Parker: "For some children under some conditions, some TV is harmful. For other children, under some conditions, or for the same children under different conditions, TV may be beneficial."

However, research is beginning to show that the so-called TV passivity as reported by Marie Wynn in her book, The Plug-In Drug, is a myth. Dr. Hope Klapper has found, in working with 170 second and fifth-graders in the New York area, that the child creates the environment and is a dynamic factor in the relationship with TV. What the child brings to the television experience is an interest level, experience of social reality, and cognitive stage and style. Dr. Louise Bates Ames, President of the Gesell Institute of Child Development in New Haven, has found most children to be active while they view; they quickly change channels when a program is boring or if a favorite is coming up on another station.

Schramm, Lyle and Parker found that TV creates a passive, withdrawn type of child only in dangerously special circumstances such as those found in a schizoid child. They state: "...we see no evidence whatsoever that TV makes a child withdrawn, or makes passivity. Rather, it encourages and reinforces these tendencies only when they exist in dangerous amounts."

On the positive side, Lieberman's study for ABC (1975) shows that a televised example can increase a child's willingness to engage in helping behavior. Fowles and Voyant wrote in Urban Review that TV might well "accelerate cognitive development when compared to the unsystematic exposure to stimuli the young child most often encounters at home."

Television, when properly used, can broaden fields of interest. It can expand horizons from which to draw information and provide the avenue for exploring activities such as sports, dancing and music. News and political broadcasts can lead to stimulating discussions. Not each viewing session must be a learning one. There is great value to simple relaxation. Watching TV after school can provide a useful and welcome transitional period, Dr. Louise Bates has written. Tension drains from children absorbed in programs after the discipline and alertness demanded by the school situation. TV watching may be a play activity with its informal presentations of images, ideas and information. The child can learn in a free, self-directed way. Often this relaxed learning and use of imagination can be meaningful.

Wilbur Schramm, in his speech "Children and TV: Some Advice to Parents" which was presented to the American Association of University Women in 1959, talked about the direct experiences he had had as a child: he saw a cobbler making shoes, he knew the town drunk, he knew about town government by seeing the police and the paddy wagon in action, he hiked 100 miles, he slept on the ground. But, via television, his children have had experiences, too: they have seen inside General Electric's plant, they have seen and heard Churchill, Nehru and Krushchev, they have seen international government in action at the U.N., they have climbed Mt. Everest with Tensing and Hilary. Schramm concluded, "The change of our children's information is in degree and source rather than kind."

In any event, today's youth is expressing deep concerns for ecology and energy conservation, is active in sports and in organizations, and is more active than alienated.

Is Children's Television the Broadcaster's Reponsibility Alone? What Reponsibility Do Parents and Educators Have?

Broadcasters accept the responsibility for using their professionalism and initiative to create the best possible children's programs and to decide the mix of programming which best serves their young audiences. However, many influences on children are more important than television's. A child's attitudes and behavior are strongly influenced by parental discipline, adult role models, economic and cultural setting, neighborhood, school, peers and church. As Dr. Karl Menninger the distinguished psychiatrist declared, children are most influenced by the real people in their lives. And as expressed by Bob Keeshan (Captain Kangaroo), "Parenthood is a non-transferable responsibility."

While broadcasters take their responsibility seriously, they hope parents will recognize theirs. Parents and children need to watch and learn together how to use television as a learning tool. First of all, parents should be aware of what programs a child watches and help him/her to select a well-balanced fare. It's also a good idea to keep tabs of total viewing time and provide opportunities for a balanced range of activities in addition to television watching. A child's curiosity can be nurtured if a parent watches television with him/her from time to time. It is possible to increase a child's information intake by pointing out facts worth remembering and relating them to specific shared experiences. Studies by Shirley O'Bryant and Charles Corder-Bolz of the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory found significantly more learning and improvement of attitudes when children watched television with a parent or teacher who commented during the program.

Educators have found that television can supplement (but not supplant) existing library and school work. Researchers have developed and are testing materials and curricula to foster critical television viewing skills and to help youth utilize TV programs more effectively. Conferences and workshops, such as the present one are very useful in spurring the broader acceptance of these new approaches to media education.

Creativity, flexibility and mutual assumption of responsibility are important. A steady flow of cultural and educational programs is available month after month, and the industry encourages parents and educators as well as young viewers to take advantage of the opportunities.

What Are Broadcasters Doing To Help Viewers (Of All Ages) Utilize Television's Educational Value?

As there should be, there is a growing alliance amoung educators, parents and broadcasters who are trying to use television constructively at home and in school. Educating children about television and how to use it as a learning tool is important.

Broadcasters are participating in, sponsoring, and in some cases, underwriting pioneering projects in the area of critical viewing skills and the use of television educationally. These efforts involve extending the educational aspects of various broadcasters so that viewers can derive more value from them.

ABC developed and regularly mails program guides of AFTERSCHOOL and WEEKEND SPECIALS and other selected programs to schools and libraries nationwide. The network has also underwritten a major study conducted by Doctors Jerome and Dorothy Singer of Yale's Family Television Research and Consultation Center. The Singers are seeking to develop a scientific method of teaching children to be discriminating viewers. In conjunction with Prime Time School Television, ABC initiated a curriculum project, "Making the News." Its printed guides are designed for use in English, social studies and other classes to teach students to analyze the content and influence of televised news.

The CBS Reading Program distributed advance scripts of selected CBS programs to classrooms along with teachers' guides providing suggestions for using the scripts. The program began in 1977 and now reaches five million students. The Reading Program underwritten by the Capital Cities group of stations is using scripts from programs on the three networks to teach reading skills with great success, according to an independent academy study. NBC has promoted parental involvement in children's television viewing through the nationwide Parent Participation TV Workshops project funded by the network and run by Teachers Guides to Television. NBC also provides Viewer Guides for special NBC programs to promote discussion and better understanding for all viewers of all ages.

The Television Information Office, on behalf of broadcasters, has been underwriting Teachers Guides to Television, a twice-yearly publication with guides to a dozen programs in each issue plus lists of recommended books, films and tapes.

Local stations are involved in supplementary educational programs as well. Just one example is the TV NEWS GAME being distributed to schools by several stations. Specifically prepared questionnaires based on local and national newscasts provide a structured classroom activity to get students interested in current events.

The National Association of Broadcasters has regularly scheduled workshops and conferences for the producers of children's programs and others who can provide input regarding the needs of the young audience. CBS, too, has organized annual Workshops for Children's Television. These seminars give local broadcasters a chance to meet and share ideas, knowledge, and understanding with producers, writers and experts in the children's programming area.

ABC Video Enterprises, in conjunction with NEA, has set up a project to prepare educational programs on video cassettes or discs beginning in 1981. Of course, programs of this sort have long been available on film or tape for use in schools through organizations such as Encyclopaedia Brittanica and Films, Inc., but now there are newer technologies and even newer educational approaches available.

WHAT PUBLIC BROADCASTING IS DOING TO HELP CHILDREN AND YOUTH

by

Dr. Peter J. Dirr
Corporation for Public Broadcasting

Introduction

In considering the impact of television and radio on the lives of children and youth in the United States, most educators apparently distinguish between the medias' impact on the unstructured free marketplace and its impact on structured learning settings. In the hands of qualified and dedicated teachers, the media become something different than when children use television and radio on their own.

In response to the statement, "Children watch enough television at home, they don't need to watch more in school," ten percent of all teachers indicated agreement, while 52 percent disagreed; the remaining 38 percent were neutral. Responses from school principals and superintendents were similar. It seems to be the belief of many educators that the media can become valuable teaching and learning resources.

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) has been charged by Congress with assisting the growth and development of public broadcasting in the United States, including its use for education. In response to that mandate, the Corporation established an Office of Educational Activities to work with public television and radio licensees and their associations--Public Broadcasting Service and National Public Radio--federal agencies, and national education organizations to promote sound uses of high quality television and radio programs by educators. The impact of these efforts on services available to children and youth can be seen especially in four areas: public broadcasting system, programming, tracking, and quality improvement. This paper will focus mainly on the instructional (school) aspects of those four areas.

Public Broadcasting System

Public broadcasting is best known for the programs broadcast over the nation's 275 public television stations and 210 public radio stations. Specific programs which are in various stages of development will be highlighted in the next section (Programming). In this section, facts and figures will be used to explain public broadcasting's commitment to children and youth. Data came from the 1977 School TV Utilization Study (co-funded by CPB and the National Center for Education Statistics) and from the Biennial Educational Surveys (1974, 1976 and 1979) in which CPB surveyed the public television and public radio systems to determine the educatio services provided by each.

On the television side of public broadcasting, the 275 stations are licensed to 166 separate organizations. In 1978-79, 155 of the licensees responded to a CPB survey. One hundred thirty-one of those licensees (85 percent) provided K-12 programming and other services. At those 131 station licensees, an average of 36 elementary and 17 secondary series was broadcast in 1978-79. Those programs were used by an estimated 14 million students (31 percent of all students in public and private elementary and secondary schools) according to the data supplied by the station respondents. These data tend to confirm the findings of the 1977 School TV Utilization Study in which approximately 32 percent of all teachers reported using television regularly in their classrooms. The latter study, conducted by CPB and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), estimated that 15 million students regularly received a portion of their instruction from television in 1977.

CPB's 1979 study of the public television licensees also found that 93 percent of the licensees which offer K-12 ITV services provide curriculum materials for some or all of the series they broadcast. In 1978-79, more than one million teacher guides were distributed to accompany the series broadcast. This was accomplished in an industry which employs an estimated 672 full-time and part-time persons in K-12 instructional television.

In 1978, the most current year for which financial data are available, it is estimated that public television licensees took in and spent approximately $47.6 million for K-12 ITV services.

On the radio side of public broadcasting, there were 202 stations in 1979 when CPB's Office of Educational Activities conducted its most recent survey. During 1978-79, only eighteen stations (9 percent) provided any K-12 instructional services. This number remains unchanged from an earlier CPB study in 1975-76. Only four of the eighteen stations had full-time K-12 instructional personnel and the total number of full-time persons at the station was 23. There were another 58 persons at related agencies such as State Education Departments.

The eighteen public radio stations which broadcast K-12 instructional programs broadcast an average of seventeen elementary level series and seven secondary level series. They reached an estimated 1.2 million students in 1978-79. More than 22,000 teacher guides were distributed to accompany the elementary/secondary series.

Seventeen public radio stations were found to be producing more than 500 programs in 27 K-12 series during 1978-79. Most of the programs were aimed at students in grades 3, 4, 5 and 6; and most were in the area of language arts.

Programming

Public Broadcasting is known for the quality programs which it provides for children and youth; SESAME STREET, MISTER ROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD, THE ELECTRIC COMPANY, ZOOM, STUDIO SEE, and SPIDER'S WEB are some television and radio programs with which most children are familiar. Many of those series have been around for a long time. They are used in classroom and/or home settings. (THE ELECTRIC COMPANY, for instance was used in 1977 by an estimated 175,000 teachers with 3.5 million students; MISTER ROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD had an estimated viewing audience of 4.5 million TV households in November 1979).

In addition to the well-known series, public broadcasting stations produce an estimated 30 new instructional television series and 25 new instructional radio series each year which receive greater than local distribution. While not all of those series are of uniformly high technical quality and some deal with topics of local or regional interest (and many, therefore, receive greater than local but less than national distribution), they all share a common goal--to provide constructive learning opportunities for children and youth.

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting has recognized its responsibility to encourage the development of programming for children and youth and has responded with a two-pronged approach, one dealing with instructional programs and the other with general children's programs.

In the instructional realm, the Corporation has assisted two independent production agencies with recent series. THINK ABOUT is a series for children in grades five and six, in skills essential to learning. Produced by the Agency for Instructional Television on behalf of a consortium for 42 state and educational agencies (including four Canadian provinces), this $4.6 million series provides a valuable resource for teachers, helping students master basic reasoning, language arts and mathematics skills. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting is funding approximately 40 percent of the production costs of these 60 15-minute programs.

3-2-1 CONTACT, 65 30-minute programs produced by the Children's Television Workshop (which also produced SESAME STREET and THE ELECTRIC COMPANY), will help tens of thousands of youngsters (ages 8-12) experience scientific thinking. The series is also designed to help children, especially girls and minorities, to recognize that science is a cooperative human endeavor open to their participation. The price tag for this series is $11.7 million. (The Corporation for Public Broadcasting's contribution to the series is $750,000). It is no wonder with costs of series so high today that there are fewer series which reach the national airwaves.

In the spring of 1979, CPB took the initiative to issue a widespread solicitation for instructional series. Emphasis was placed on series for children in grades 1-3, 7-9, and 10-12, since previous research had shown those levels to be in greatest need of new resources. Twenty-one producers responded to the solicitation. After a peer panel review process and staff recommendations, the CPB Board gave staff approval to negotiate contracts for three series: (1) COMMUNITY OF LIVING THINGS, a seventh-to-ninth-grade life science series to be produced by WHRO-TV in Norfolk, VA.; (2) a ninth-to-twelfth-grade mental health series which would be produced by the Agency for Instructional Television; and (3) TUNED IN, a television viewing skills series for middle school students, to be produced by WNET-TV in New York. These series will be available for broadcast in 1980-81.

It is CPB's intention to award similar grants for ITV productions on a regular basis in the coming years, probably in late spring.

In the realm of general children's programming, the Corporation has identified a need for a daily children's block which would probably be broadcast in the late afternoon. Research has suggested that children ages 6-11 should be the primary target for this program service. CPB is currently exploring ways to develop, test, and fund program concepts for a high quality children's program service.

In addition to encouraging and assisting the production of new series, CPB has funded the development of print materials to extend the educational uses of high quality children's programs. Since 1977, CPB's Office of Educational Activities has funded, in whole or in part, the development of high school study guides for NOVA, the highly acclaimed science series. A study guide and reading transcripts were developed for STUDIO SEE, a general interest series for middle school youngsters. In order to stimulate interest in THE SHAKESPEARE PLAYS, the series which will bring to life all 36 of the bard's plays over a six-year period, CPB commissioned the development of a study kit (records, posters, synopses of the first six plays, and ditto masters for teachers) which was sent to all high schools and junior high schools in the country. A 64-page viewer's guide is being developed for the first American-produced anthropology and archaeology series, ODYSSEY. Currently in progress is the development of a new NPR educational series, ENERGY AND THE WAY WE LIVE. That series will have print support materials.

These remarks have focused largely on the activities of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and its services to children and youth. Public television's interconnection and national programming service, the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), has also been active in assuring that available children's programs are broadcast and in encouraging the development of new programs. As this paper is being written, PBS staff is developing an operational plan for an educational and children's program service (referred to as The Educational Telecommunications Program Service) which will have a unit for instructional programs and general programs for children and youth. Operation of this service is expected to cost $.5 million in the first year. It will distribute an estimated $5 million worth of children's programming funded from a variety of sources.

Public radio's operating organization, National Public Radio, established an Educational Services office in 1978. Since then, that office has developed several audio/radio support materials: PROLOGUES TO SHAKESPEARE, six half-hour programs introducing each of the plays broadcast by PBS in 1978-79; SHAKESPEARE: A PORTRAIT IN SOUND, describing Shakespeare, his times and his works; and ENERGY AND THE WAY WE LIVE mentioned earlier; and SALT II: TOWARD SECURITY OR DANGER?, a series based on the senate debates. More than 85,000 copies of the SALT II materials have been distributed and copies of the Shakespeare portrait have been requested by more than 5,000 school libraries. NPR has entered into an agreement with the Folger Library to distribute a multi-media package of slides and the Shakespeare portrait.

Recently, NPR broadcast two 90-minute special talk programs with Fred Rogers. One program dealt with sibling rivalry and the other with a child's imagination and fantasy. The success of those programs has led NPR to seek funding for a series of thirteen FAMILY WEEKEND SPECIALS which will also feature Fred Rogers. It is NPR's hope that these programs will cause parents to lead their children to serious uses of radio.

Tracking

CPB has been given the legislative mandate to assist the growth and development of public television and radio, including their use in education. The Office of Educational Activities has developed a research plan which provides for periodic tracking of the educational output of public broadcast stations to detect changes in their educational services (Biennial Educational Surveys) and periodic tracking of the effect of that output as it is used in schools throughout the country (School TV Utilization Study).

The Biennial Educational Surveys have on three occasions (1974, 1976, 1979) provided consistent information about the educational services provided by public television and radio stations. Because that information (reported earlier in this paper) has shown a consistent commitment by public broadcasting to education over the three administrations, the study period might be extended to every three or four years.

The Biennial studies have shown that approximately 85 percent of the 166 public television licensees provided K-12 instructional services. They broadcast an average of 36 elementary and 17 secondary series each year which are used by approximately 14 million students. Eighty-one percent of the licensees distribute programs in non-broadcast formats as well as broadcast. There are about 672 full-time and part-time individuals involved in K-12 services for licensees and related agencies (e.g., broadcast councils) across the country.

Nine percent of the 202 CPB-qualified public radio stations provide K-12 services. They broadcast an average of seventeen elementary and eight secondary series which are used by approximately 1.2 million students. There are less than 100 persons employed full-time to provide K-12 services at the station and related agencies.

The School TV Utilization Study, conducted for the first time in 1977, provided first-time national estimates of the use of television in classrooms throughout the United States and will provide baseline data against which to compare the findings of future studies. Those future studies will include radio as well as television. Current plans call for replication of the School TV Utilization Study in 1981.

From the School TV Utilization Study, it was learned that in 1976-77 approximately 727,000 teachers used television to provide instruction regularly to an estimated 15 million students. Total school district expenditures for ITV in 1976-1977 were estimated to be $75-100 million. There are approximately 4,000 district-level ITV coordinators and 35,000 building-level ITV coordinators throughout the country. TV sets are readily available to most teachers and are usually in good working condition. However, two-thirds of the sets are black-and-white. Fifty-five percent of teachers with ITV have access to videotape recorders (especially high school teachers). The study found that although few educators had been trained to use ITV (17 percent of teachers, 27 percent of principals and 31 percent of superintendents), most had favorable attitudes toward ITV.

Quality Improvement

In addition to tracking trends in the provision and use of educational television and radio programs, the Office of Educational Activities has taken steps to improve the quality of those programs and related services.

As a first step toward improving program quality and use, CBP introduced the Program Improvement Project in 1978. This project is designed to provide a focus and framework for what had previously been many uncoordinated research projects conducted by CPB and others. The first step was to convene a meeting of leading educators, public broadcasters and researchers to assist in identifying research topics which needed further investigation. That meeting was also attended by representatives from NCES, NIMH, NIE and USOE. It resulted in the identification of manageable research topics and specific recommendations for producers and users of television for instruction.

One concrete outcome of the 1978 meeting was a series of publications commissioned by CPB which will benefit producers, directors and writers of instructional television programs as well as the teachers and students who use those programs. Dr. Robert Gagne, Professor of Education at Florida State University, and Dr. James Carey, Assistant Professor of Education at Arizona State University, are writing a booklet, *Principles of Human Learning in Instructional Television*. Dr. Kenneth O'Bryan, Head of Communciation at Toronto's Addiction Research Foundation and longtime ITV researcher and producer, is writing two booklets: *The Project Team in ITV* and *Effective ITV Production Techniques*. Dr. O'Bryan is also preparing a training manual for ITV telewriters, *Writing for Instructional Television*. All of these products are expected to be available by mid-1980.

In 1978, a related study examined the effectiveness of teacher and student support materials (including reading transcripts) developed for the series STUDIO SEE. More recently, CPB has funded a portion of the summative evaluation of THINK ABOUT. The fact that the total research budget for THINK ABOUT (including formative and summative research) will be approximately $1 million by the time the series is completed is one indication of the growing concern on the part of broadcasters and educators to improve and document the effectiveness of new instructional programming. Although not all series can afford such large research budgets, most new instructional series have some research component.

This paper has dealt with public broadcasting's services to children and youth because this conference is to focus on that portion of our society. However, it would be an omission to close without at least mentioning some of CPB's services to adult learners.

Since 1978, CPB's Station-College Executive Project in Adult Learning has brought together (in workshops, conferences and a teleconference, in conjunction with PBS, AACJC and NAEB) more than 1,200 educators and public broadcasters to explore ways to expand and improve the services they provide for adult learners. In 1979 and 1980, CPB is joining with NCES to conduct the Higher Education Utlization Study, a survey of the uses of television and radio by institutions of higher education.

For the first time in the history of telecourses, CPB has acquired off-air recording rights for the science series, COSMOS, (premiering in fall, 1980) and will permit colleges and universities (as well as high schools) to record the series off-air and retain it for up to five years for payment of a $50 fee each year the tapes are retained.

Informal adult learning has been aided through CPB's support of viewer guides for ODYSSEY and viewer guides and course materials for the first two seasons of THE SHAKESPEARE PLAYS.

Public television and radio have a long-standing commitment to provide children and youth with programs which will enhance their growth and development. This commitment is evidenced by the many high quality programs produced and broadcast throughout the country and the use of those programs by millions of children and youth in school and home settings.

TELEVISION, TEACHING AND THE SCHOOLS

by

Saul Rockman
Agency for Instructional Television

Television, teaching and schools: there are some inescapable relationships here. The connection between the first two is well enough known: television does teach. It's the other connection--the special relationship between television and the schools--that I want to explore.

In his recent book, Neil Postman, a noted critic of teaching and schools, turns his attention to the relationship between teaching and television. He argues that commercial television is the nation's primary curriculum for educating its children. The schools, he believes, provide a secondary, less important, and less meaningful education. Though commercial television is an entertainment medium--not an educational one--television does provide instruction. The television programs children watch do teach them much (both good and bad) about the world around them. But this television "curriculum" is limited, redundant and haphazard, and it doesn't always teach what society wants children to learn. Commercial television doesn't do what society has designated as the task of the schools, even if it has begun to take its teaching role more seriously over the past few years after much prodding from pressure groups and government.

Teaching with Commercial Television

Commercial television has tried hard to associate itself with education and schooling. But the directions television is taking are not necessarily consonant with those taken by the schools. A small but significant portion of children's television is designed to be entertaining and educational at the same time. Each of the networks and many local stations have high-quality programs containing prosocial and educational messages. Saturday morning programs--FAT ALBERT, SCHOOL HOUSE ROCK, and IN THE NEWS, as well as various afterschool specials--are appealing, entertaining, and to some degree, educational. These programs have the high entertainment values necessary to draw an audience for the educational--and commercial--messages.

While these programs are designed to be broadly educational, they are by no means designed to fit the basic curriculum of the schools. They may be educational and informational, but they are not instructional; there is no obvious curriculum link. Seeing these programs in a classroom would seem strange.

This doesn't mean that the educational content of such programming is an afterthought; to the contrary, it is included by design. The closing credits are likely to include a famous school of education, a psychologist, and an educational consultant or two. These programs win awards from parent groups, receive endorsement from PTAs, and become part of presentations to industry groups. When called before Congress or a regulatory agency, network and production executives frequently refer to them. And these programs may indeed make a positive contribution to the education of our children; but this is an education that has no connection to the schools.

Schools do make use of some kinds of commercial and public television programs as adjuncts to the instructional curriculum. These are programs that are designed as entertainment for the broad viewing public, like NOVA or THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SPECIALS, and commercial programs, like CBS's ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT or Mobil's EDWARD THE KING, have been used productively as home-viewing assignments in history, English, social studies, and science. Teachers' Guides to Television and the study guides of Prime Time School Television facilitate classroom use of such substantive series as HOLOCAUST or ROOTS: THE NEXT GENERATION. These teacher materials include discussion questions, suggested readings, and classroom activities that provide a curriculum, a context, and a motivation to view worthwhile prime-time programs that students might not otherwise watch. They are designed for secondary school classes whose members are among the lightest users of television. These programs are also likely to receive the endorsements of national teacher and parent organizations and some of their promotional help as well.

Teachers who keep current television programming in mind as they prepare their year's lesson plans can use prime-time television to motivate reading. Television adaptations of literary classics--Brave New World and The Scarlet Letter are recent examples--can be included easily in the curriculum and may stimulate interest in further reading.

But none of these television groups, obviously, was designed to be part of a planned instructional curriculum, nor were they created with a student audience in mind. While these programs are promoted by educators and foundations, and do produce noticeable benefits for education, enormous secondary benefits accrue as well to the broadcasters. When they appear before the FCC, the FTC and the Congress, broadcasters point to these high-quality entertainment efforts as a justification for low quality in the balance of their programming. Admittedly, it's a trade-off--teacher organizations and parent groups can make productive use of these programs. In return, the commercial broadcasters are guaranteed a larger audience and they get to congratulate themselves in public for providng a worthwhile service. Moreover, excellent programs with proven educational appeal (if not proven educational benefits) enjoy easy sales in the home and school audio-visual marketplace. Even as they provide benefits to the schools, the programmers are seeking other sources of revenue to recover any costs associated with their educational endeavors.

Another way programs designed primarily to entertain can provide educational benefits is through the use of scripts to teach reading. This began with efforts initiated several years ago by Dr. Michael McAndrew. In an intriguing experiment he found that poor readers could be motivated to practice their reading skills on scripts of soon-to-be-broadcast television programs. Networks and syndicators (e.g., CBS Television Reading Program) have been working to provide scripts to classrooms where, after having read the scripts and perhaps acting out the parts, the children have the "reward" of seeing the program at home. Many students seek out program-related books to read after they have read the scripts (e.g., LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE).

Here, too, the schools are using television meant primarily for entertainment, adapting it to solve a problem not related to program content. There is nothing instructional in the programs themselves, only in the secondary use the schools make of them. Here again, television is not making an educational contribution, though it is reaping benefits from television.

Commercial television has tried another approach to providing educational substance to young viewers that comes closer to meeting school needs directly. Rather than starting with a television program and attempting to make a connection with the schools, some broadcasters have started with the school curriculum and built an entertainment program around school-based ideas. These programs are not designed to instruct, but simply to extend common instructional themes from the school to the home. GETTING AROUND is one such series. Distributed throughout Indiana, GETTING AROUND used the intermediate curriculum as the basis for magazine-format programs with a single curriculum theme. The commercial sponsor secured initial broadcast time in the late afternoons, and also provided for repeat broadcast times during in-school hours. The sponsor distributed point-of-purchase print for students, parents, and teachers to supplement the programs and also mailed copies directly to teachers. The programs were assigned home viewing in some places and in-school programming in others, with print support for effective instructional use in either case.

There are several ways educators use television programs (and television uses educators). Whatever the value of these programs to the schools--no matter how they teach or facilitate teaching--they are not instructional television. Entertainment programming, whether it has educational value or not, is created to obtain an audience for the sponsor. To broadcasters, television programs are a means to the sponsor's end. To educators, television programs are a means to the viewer's end; the instructional goal is paramount. Instructional or school television keeps the educator, not the broadcaster, in control of program content.

Entertainment programming used for instruction is still basically entertainment. Television designed from the start to be part of the instructional system will always be a more effective and efficient teacher.

Oddly, neither education nor the television industry seems to hold school television in high esteem. School television is a very small piece to this nation's educational effort. It is part of the limited-materials budget--the same budget that buys books and slides. Similarly, school television is not a major part of the television business. The $40 million per week that the three networks spend on prime-time programming would keep school television production going for four or five years at the present rate.

Small is not necessarily bad. School television has demonstrated its instructional effectiveness. A growing number of studies indicate television can teach things important to schools and teach them well. Television programming designed for instructional purposes has also proven itself the technical and artistic equivalent of commercial children's programming. Both kinds win Emmys; both are entertaining.

School television may not be a widely known asset in the classroom, but it doesn't seem to be a negative force in society. I have yet to hear a complaint about too much sex or violence on school television, and I don't think it's been accused of increasing cavities by promoting heavy sugar consumption. I can't imagine a group of angry parents picketing a school insisting on better instructional television for their children. Nor have I noticed any articles written by physicians who relate stunted emotional development to watching too much instructional television.

If it doesn't do all the bad things people are always blaming on television, how come I don't hear cheers and "hosannahs" and read praises on the editorial pages of newspapers? Maybe it's because few people know about school television. I believe that most of us, even educators, either don't know about or don't care about school television. We are willing to keep talking about the educational impact of television watched in the home, but we're not able to consider television in the schools as important and worthy of discussion. We emphasize teaching about television so that children can become more knowledgeable viewers. Why not more discussion about teaching with television so that children can become more knowledgeable?

We have ignored a not-very-glamorous species of television at a time when its role in education needs to be carefully examined. After the book and the chalkboard, the television set may be the most widely available technology in today's schools. More than 15 million students view television programs as a regular part of their classroom activities. About one-third of this country's teachers use television as a substantial teaching resource. Even so, in many schools, instructional television may not even be thought of as television.

But it is television, and it can do many things. For example, an economics series for fifth, sixth and seventh graders, TRADE-OFFS, was first used during the 1978-79 school year. The series' purpose is to increase the quality and quantity of economics instruction for an audience whose teachers aren't capable of providing such instruction. The fifteen-program series was developed jointly by the Agency for Instructional Television, the Joint Council on Economics Education and the Canadian Foundation for Economic Education and cost one million dollars.

In its first year about 25,000 teachers and more than 500,000 students viewed the series, and both received a substantial education in economics. In its second year, the number of stations carrying the series almost doubled, and we believe the number of viewers also increased greatly. Given the longevity and history of other major school television series, it is almost certain that more than 5 million students will view the series over the next few years. For about 20 cents per student, they will receive solid economics instruction.

While economics instruction for fifth, sixth and seventh grade students may be a useful contribution in preparing productive members of our society, it is not always viewed as the bread-and-butter of schooling. A more basic series, THINK ABOUT, deals with the reasoning and problem-solving processes and their applications in and out of school. This fifth and sixth grade series of 60 programs is being used in schools for the first time this year. Its initial acceptance seems enthusiastic and early indications are that it is having an impact on the children.

What makes television series like these work? Several factors come to mind. First, the programs deal with issues that are important to the schools; education wouldn't fund their production otherwise. Second, the television programs are appealing and well-produced; students wouldn't tolerate less. Third, and perhaps most important, the programs don't stand alone; they are part of a lesson conducted by the teacher. School television can be distinguished from other television programs most readily by the expectations for the programs' use. Television viewing in the home is a passive, fleeting experience. You watch the program and then it's gone. In the schools, something different happens. A teacher introduces the program, sets the context for its viewing, relates it to the curriculum. Following the program, the teacher conducts a discussion or follow-up activity which clarifies the program, reinforces the message, and incorporates the program's content into the ongoing instructional process. In this way, television works in partnership with the classroom teacher to provide instruction that neither could accomplish without the other.

Instruction with television can be a way of improving education by providing resources to help teachers do better what they currently are doing. THINK ABOUT does this, for example, by focusing on the thinking processes that underlie much of basic education; by showing that skills learned in school can be applied in the child's world; and by stressing that skills can be integrated across traditional subject areas.

Instructional television can facilitate the diffusion, and speed the adoption of new curriculum materials and approaches. Historically, television helped spread the "new math" and teach teachers and students simultaneously. It is doing the same thing for metric education. TRADE-OFFS provides curriculum materials that normally would not be part of the school's agenda; it makes economics education part of elementary school.

School television can help maintain the quality of education in times of fiscal or personnel cutbacks. When specialists are no longer as widely available as they used to be, when electives are being reduced, television often can be called in to maintain the quality and variety of educational offerings.

Given these accomplishments, why does school television go unrecognized, ignored by much of education and most of the general public? Television in the schools does not lose the magic that television holds for children. The picture appears when a button is pushed, just as it does on the family's television set. It doesn't require equipment that is not common to the home, like filmstrips or films. And at a time when cassette and disc technology is stimulating enormous changes in home entertainment, the same excitement about this technology exists for its educational adaptations.

Why is school television so unknown? Because it's in the schools? Because it's television shown when adults are at work? Because you probably wouldn't watch if you knew it was on? Watch the programs. See how they're used in the classrooms. You'll start talking about school television, too.

ABC COMMUNITY RELATIONS

by

Pamela N. Warford
ABC Community Relations

Introduction

In order to further expand television's public service commitment, the Office of Community Relations was instituted with the Public Relations Department of the American Broadcasting Company in 1977. One of the major responsibilities of this department is to increase communication and understanding among broadcasters, educators, and parents. By providing educational materials for classroom use, by encouraging research efforts, and by expanding the opportunities for public dialogue, Community Relations is working to emphasize that the television medium can be useful and productive in helping educate children.

The integration of quality television programs into English and social studies curricula, the teaching of critical TV viewing skills, and the use of television scripts in reading programs are all evidence of a growing appreciation on the part of teachers toward the positive uses of television in the classroom. In order to facilitate formal and informal learning for educators, students, and parents, the following projects have been designed and implemented by ABC:

Teachers' Guides

Teachers' guides help educators use quality programs in the classroom by providing background materials. Typically, a teachers' guide includes background information, a synopsis, and suggestions for activities tied into a particular program. Through classroom discussion, these suggested activities help students understand concepts covered in the program, master knowledge, and develop skills. Study guides, as they are also known, additionally include a section on learning resources that lists related films and a bibliography.

In past seasons, study guides have been developed for such ABC programs as ROLL OF THUNDER, HEAR MY CRY, ELEANOR AND FRANKLIN, and the rebroadcast of ROOTS. In 1979, Community Relations projects included educational materials associated with FRIENDLY FIRE, and the fall and winter seasons of ABC AFTERSCHOOL SPECIALS and ABC WEEKEND SPECIALS. Additionally, a viewer's guide to two television dramas on aging--VALENTINE and a special episode of FAMILY--was prepared by the Cultural Information Service for use in adult education classes and interfaith discussion groups. Most recently, Community Relations sponsored a similar guide to ABC's presentation of AMBER WAVES.

In early 1979, in conjunction with ROOTS: THE NEXT GENERATIONS, ABC produced its most ambitious effort to date in the area of educational tie-ins. Three educational guides were developed and sponsored by ABC. The NAACP, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, and the National Council for the Social Studies, jointly produced a sixteen-page newspaper supplement entitled, "The Record: The Black Experience in America, 1619-1979." For use in interfaith group discussions, the National Council of Churches distributed 100,000 guides on the series to Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish religious educators. However, the backbone of our educational effort was the sixteen-page full-color guide produced by the Chicago-based organization, Prime Time School Television. Over 200,000 copies were printed and distributed to educators nationwide. As a result of a National Education Association alert on the availability of this guide, Prime Time School Television received 200 to 300 requests a day from educators over a six-week period.

Another major component of the ROOTS II program for educators was developed because of the belief that the script to a television production is a valuable and appealing way to teaching reading and writing. Through ABC's initiation, the Associated Press agreed to an unprecedented distribution of scripts of the first two-hour program to newspapers throughout the country.

ABCs of Children's Television: A Progress Report

In September, 1979, an informative guide describing the positive evolution of children's programming on the ABC Television Network was released. Entitled "The ABCs of Children's Television: A Progress Report," this guide reflects ABC's efforts to meet the entertainment and educational needs of today's young viewers. Also included was specific information on ABC's new offering for the fall, such as H.E.L.P.!!! (Dr. Henry's Emergency Lessons for People) and the consumer educational messages included in THE PLASTICMAN COMEDY/ADVENTURE SHOW, plus program highlights on ABC AFTERSCHOOL SPECIALS and ABC WEEKEND SPECIALS. The first WATCH THE PROGRAM/READ THE BOOK mailing of the 1979-80 school season was included in this report.

"The ABCs of Children's Television" was sent to all ABC Television Network affiliates for use in their educational communities, and to over 3,500 elementary and secondary school librarians, teachers, education editors, and government officials.

Making the News

"Making the News," a self-contained course on television news designed for high school students and teachers was distributed in October, 1979. This curriculum unit explores four major news formats: the evening news, the interview, the documentary, and the television magazine program.

Prepared by Prime Time School Television in cooperation with ABC News, the unit is designed as a sixteen-page lesson plan summarizing the different news formats and the relationship of each format to the critical decisions involved in news production -- the selection of the issue or event, the structure of the story, the depth and length, and the perspective and objectivity maintained in the coverage.

Following the summary of each format are student viewing logs, suggestions for class project and lesson ideas. Students are asked to examine the difficulty faced by television news producers and the broadcast industry as a whole.

Containing options for lessons spanning one month of classroom instruction, "Making the News" materials are adaptable to English, social studies, journalism, or media classes. While ABC News programs are used as models, students and teachers compare reporting among all three commercial networks and public television, as well as local newscasts and print journalism.

A total of 750,000 news units was distributed. In addition to ABC-Television-Network-affiliated station distribution, the guide was inserted in the National Education Association's October/November high school edition of *Today's Education* and the November issues of *Media and Methods*. Members of the National Council for Social Studies and the National Council of Teachers of English also received copies through their associations' mailings. This curriculum unit proved to be of interest to college-level instructors of media and journalism courses as well.

Research is being conducted by ABC to evaluate the effectiveness and appeal of this project with teachers and students. Preliminary results indicate that the majority of teachers surveyed were enthusiastic about student achievements and were interested in future use of the guide.

XIII Winter Olympic Poster/Guide

A unique poster/guide to the XIII Winter Olympics, prepared by Prime Time School Television, was designed for display and educational use in classrooms and physical education programs. The poster/guide provided a comprehensive telecast schedule, a sample scorecard and background on each event of the Winter Olympics competitions. The poster/guide was distributed to athletic directors, physical education teachers, and coaches across the country.

Interest in the Winter Olympics competition resulted in the use of the poster/guide in classrooms and by ABC-Television-Network-affiliated stations. In Peru, New York, the school system designated January 7-11 as "Olympic Week." Eighth graders in 25 classrooms focused on the Olympics in English, social studies and math class activities using the ABC-sponsored guide as a resource. According to Ms. Mary Lou Zaferakis, director of the project, "This innovative and educational experiment was a tremendous success. Our thanks to ABC for their help in facilitating our effort to motivate learning."

Watch the Program/Read the Book

A continuing ABC project involves the award-winning ABC AFTERSCHOOL SPECIALS and ABC WEEKEND SPECIALS. In response to numerous requests from librarians for educational materials about programs based on books for children, ABC initiated in 1978 the monthly distribution during the school year of background materials on upcoming ABC AFTERSCHOOL/WEEKEND SPECIALS. These mailings are designed to encourage the reading and discussion of the particular book in conjunction with the program.

Distribution was set up with the cooperation of the American Library Association, which supplied a mailing list of more than 2,500 elementary and secondary school librarians across the country. With additional requests, the mailing list has grown to over 4,000. The background materials supplied to the librarians include: a display poster highlighting the scheduled specials that month, scenarios of each special, biographies of the authors, and bibliographies of additional works by the authors.

The response to this project has been gratifying. Approximately 1,500 letters from librarians and school officials expressing interest and appreciation for the project have been received since its inception. David L. Rose, district librarian and media specialist of the Claremont, California, Unified School District, wrote, "I wish to express my thanks for receiving from you the fact sheets concerning the ABC AFTERSCHOOL AND WEEKEND SPECIALS and the associated bibliographical information. It is a pleasure to see a television network taking the time to provide schools with such information." And from Washington state, a library media specialist wrote: "Your programs make these books very much in demand. Be assured you are encouraging reading."

Mention of this educational project has been included in several teachers' publications, such as the International Reading Association's The Reading Teacher (February, 1979) and The Journal of Reading (October, 1979).

The Yale Study

Television is different from other media forms. To use it properly, children must have the support and guidance comparable to that given in developing the skills and standards they apply to more traditional sources of information and entertainment. Critical viewing skills are designed to make children more aware of their video environment. One of the most ambitious projects in this area is the eighteen-month study recently completed at Yale University and funded by an ABC grant. Dorothy and Jerome Singer, psychology professors and co-directors of the Yale Family Television Research and Consultation Center, have developed a curriculum for teachers to use in helping children become more intelligent and discriminating consumers of television.

The Singers drafted and tested an eight-week lesson course for use in the third, fourth, and fifth grades. Focusing on motivating children to use television in a more active manner, the study also shows ways in which parents and teachers can use the natural interest of children in television to enhance cognitive and social skills, including reading.

Be a TV Reviewer

Television can also be used to encourage children to write. This was exemplified by a pilot study ABC conducted entitled "Be a TV Reviewer." In this pilot study, teachers received posters and guidelines about what a TV reviewer does, and children were invited to send in reviews about any television program describing why they thought it was effective or not.

The pilot studies were conducted in White Plains, New York, and Sioux City, Iowa, with voluntary cooperation of the local superintendent and elementary school principals. Participation was open to children in grades two through six.

It was hoped, through this project, to encourage the child to think critically about programs watched, and then to write those thoughts.

Through a follow-up questionnaire sent to teachers who participated in the project, the network learned their reactions which were equally important. Several wrote that they had not previously utilized television to stimulate reading or writing in classrooms. Others wrote to say that this project suggested others, such as surveys of television viewing habits, polls of "best programs," and the creation of ideas for new shows.

The results showed that children can be discerning viewers. Several hundred reviews were received, and all indicated a high degree of motivation. ABC received typed reviews, art work accompanying the reviews, and program suggestions demonstrating creative imagination.

Here is a sample review on THE LOVE BOAT:

> I am writing about THE LOVE BOAT because I like the show the best. I like the program because the characters for the parts have a comical touch in what they say, except for those love parts. I can also relate to what they say and how they react in their situations.
>
> I like the techniques of communicating by using humor and warmth. The program is about five friendly, understanding crew members. There are also guest star appearances on THE LOVE BOAT.
>
> The people always have funny problems and are in love. I do not think that the dialogue is that realistic. However, you have to consider that this is a fantasy program.

Television is a reality in a child's world. We hope that teachers will use the medium as an audiovisual aid, along with ancillary materials to make television a valuable tool in the overall learning process.

Samples of our teachers' guides and other materials described may be obtained by writing:

Ms. Pamela N. Warford, Director
ABC Community Relations
1330 Avenue of the America
New York, NY 10019

From the perspective of...

Researchers

THEORETICAL BASES FOR RECEIVERSHIP OR CRITICAL VIEWING SKILLS CURRICULA

by

James A. Anderson
University of Utah

Introduction

The development of curricula which have as content the use of television by children and/or adults has been remarkable in the past 24 months. Such curricula have been firmly placed on the educational agenda by the actions of traditional and non-traditional funding agents. In the first quarter of 1978 the Idaho Department of Education announced the funding of an ESEA Title IV-C Innovative Education project promoting critical receivership skills for the third through sixth grades. In rapid succession there followed the ABC television network funded project, the National PTA project, the National Education Association project, and the four Office of Education projects announced in the fall of 1978. These projects, plus others supported by local school districts, reported to a national conference held in Philadelphia during the first week of November, 1979. This paper, which traces the lineages of critical receivership or viewing skills curricula, draws primarily from those reports.

While currently enjoying a fresh bloom, the notion of critical skills which direct the processing of information is old educationally. It appears in classical Greek thought and is one of the touchstones of liberal education (4). The application of these skills to information presented in a particular medium as in critical reading skills, listening skills, or televiewing skills simply acknowledges that the medium of presentation is an integral part of the message. In short there are elements of grammar, syntax, symbols, and meaning which are medium specific.

The skills, constructs and facts which could be taught in a critical televiewing curriculum exceed by several orders of magnitude those which are selected for presentation within the necessarily limited frame given to curriculum developers. The selection per se then provides us with good insight as to the underlying organizing frames used by the developers. Of these there appear to be four: (1) the impact intervention model, (2) the goal attainment model, (3) the cultural understanding model, and (4) the literacy model. We will treat each of these briefly in turn.

Impact Intervention Model

The impact intervention model derives from the prospecting research which has characterized most of the contribution to the study of the effects of mass communication. This research assumes that content can be characterized into categories which in turn have predictive utility for subsequent viewer behavior. The violent-television-leads-to-subsequent-viewer-aggression research is, of course, the premier example, but any analysis belongs in this category. Consequently, we would add most studies done on advertising and the like. Among other things, this research has shown that the effects of content are not absolute, that respondent variables are likely to intervene in the process. The underlying concept of the intervention model is that one can precondition viewers to modify the effects of viewing toward pro-social ends. Doolittle displays the underlying constructs in presenting the reasoning for his own study:

> Since television has been identified as a source of antisocial learning, it is suggested that schools might consider developing methods of counteracting television's negative influence. . . (The) approach would be to interfere with the broader television learning process so as to reduce children's acquiring of antisocial influence (5, p.2).

One might also note the introduction to the Singer et.al. (12) article located elsewhere in the journal.

Curricula developed on the intervention model direct the student toward the identification and manipulation of content. Potentially negative content types are identified and strategies for reducing the negative consequences are supplied. For example, this excerpt is taken from materials developed by one of the U.S. Office of Education projects:

> Television often exposes children to adult actions and relationships on television for which they are unprepared. They are thrown into an adult world long before they have the information and maturity to cope with it.
>
> How television affects a child will depend on how the child interprets what is viewed and the use the child makes of that information. Parents and other adults can be the determining factor in making television a positive learning experience (13, p. 1).

The quotation highlights the two configuring elements of this perspective: (1) television does things to the viewer; and (2) intervention can change the consequences.

This perspective is essentially therapeutic in its outcomes. The influence of television is managed and redirected toward pre-selected goals. There can be, then, a direct link between instruction and subsequent behavior in the student-viewers which, on the one hand, simplifies the conditions of measurement, but on the other, places a heavy burden of performance on the instructional effort.

Goal Attainment Model

The goal attainment model has been the dominant paradigm, to date, at least in terms of the number of produced curricular modules. The model draws its support from uses and gratifications research and theory. This position can be briefly stated as: The force of individual interpretation of basic human needs results in differential combinations of problems and solutions which in turn constitute differential motives for attempts at gratification-seeking or problem-solving behavior which result in differential patterns of actual media consumption (adapted from 10, p. 6). Individual uses and gratifications, then, set the agenda for media use and that use can be interpreted and evaluated only after the goal agenda is known.

In this perspective, content is a poor indicator of the consequences of viewing. Content is important only insofar as it is efficient in attaining some goal. Television does not do things to people but people do things with television.

Curricula of this lineage first direct individuals toward the motives they have for attending the medium; second, help the student develop standards by which television use can be evaluated as solution of or gratification for those motives; and third, provide practice in the process of media-use decision making. As the WNET OE project puts it:

> This...curriculum will provide your students with the inner resources for making their own decisions about the television programs they watch (14, p. ii).

And the Far West Laboratory's project states:

> In seeking to teach students to become more critical consumers of television, this course recognizes the central role the students play in this effort. It is not television itself that is under the microscope; it is the students' relationship to television (2, p. 2).

This perspective greatly complexifies both the instructional effort and the measurement of outcomes. In instruction it is not useful to provide standard strategies for preselected outcomes. Proper outcomes are dependent on goal attainment. Teachers are typically cautioned about imposing their own standards. The curriculum guide of commercials from the Idaho elementary project reminds its teachers:

> Children are capable of making market decisions to meet their needs. Their criteria may not agree with ours but are usually justified (14, p. c-4).

The instructional focus demands a shift from high content to high interaction approaches. The University of Texas summer program reports:

> There is an infinite number of possible questions to ask about television viewing, content and production. These questions may be categorized by type of thinking/reasoning/recall skills that the questions might tap and develop. Our approach was simply one of asking questions--we asked questions and questions and responded to questions with more questions (7, p. 4).

As long as standards and goals are debatable, measurable instructional outcomes reside in the process of analysis as there is no longer a singular behavioral outcome appropriate to the class. Testing instruments are situational, starting with an intended goal and posing questions concerning probable agents of attainment and consequence of use.

Of course when standards and goals are not debatable (as often in parochial education), instruction and evaluation are much more direct even under this theoretical aegis. The Australian Catholic Office of Education states:

> The fundamental purpose of mass media education is to produce persons who will be appreciative, critical and discriminating listeners, readers and viewers. Ideally, the youth of tomorrow will be equipped to seek the truth in the mass media they use (1, p. 19).

Cultural Understanding Model

In the cultural understanding model, one studies television (or any popular art) as a index of the culture from which it springs. It presumes that the members of a culture are in a continual process of negotiating that culture. That negotiations gets done in the clubrooms of the Rotarians, in the halls of churches, in the living rooms of homes, and in the expression of the media. The contemporary content of the media provides panoply of issues, conflicts, offers and counter-offers which the current negotiations involve. The content of the media, then, is not trivial but is composed of the shared values, ideas and symbols by which individuals are joined as a people.

In contemplating the direction the study of television takes under this model, Newcomb writes,

> The cultural context, then, forces us to look at television as used by people in history. More specifically, we will have to understand the role of entertainment in culture and society and become more aware of the history of entertainment forms and content (8, p. 4).

One of the more complete curriculum efforts from this approach is in the work of Deming (3). In her work television is not an adversary but simply one more element of the culture. Educationally, television is a particularly useful element of the culture because it contains expressions from the entire spectrum of that culture. The critical examination of its content, then, is rich in insight into the ways that culture functions.

Instructional approaches from this theoretical perspective are those of exegesis and criticism. Evaluation relates to the tools and processes of analysis. Proximate outcomes are difficult to identify; the final outome, as argued from this perspective, is the liberally educated individual--one, as Gerbner suggested, with the ability to transcend cultural membership (6).

Visual Literacy Model.

The visual literacy model is perhaps the converse of the cultural understanding model. Its focus is on technique as content. The message is dependent on its method of presentation. One understands messages and controls their consequences by being sophisticated about techniques. An undoubted singular work in aesthetic pragmatics is that of Zettl. He encapsulates this model in writing.

> There are, of course, subtle aesthetic variables that we can use to produce a specific aesthetic response in the recipient, even if he is not consciously aware of these variables. In short, we can manipulate a person's perception, and ultimately his behavior, by a precise, calculated application of aesthetic variables and variable complexes (17, p. 8).

Shorr transfers this theorem to the classroom in using the following as the premier objective of the Milford project:

> ...comprehensive television education program prepares students to cope with television by familiarizing them with the symbols, grammar and techniques of visual communication...(11, p. 73).

More than any other, instruction from this approach is in the doing. Students are taught how to produce news programs, commercials and entertainment. The methods of special effects come in for particular attention as in the PTA module, de-mystifying or perhaps de-toxifying TV monsters (16). Evaluation, of course, is cued to the ability to describe and/or produce technique.

Negotiated Model

In practical fact, a curriculum developed from any of the preceding models passes through a negotiation process in which curriculum development or adoption committees of school administrators, parent groups and teachers are a significant element in innovation. Within our ten years of experience in the development of receivership skills curricula, this process ultimately brings together classroom teachers with an interest in or an instructional need to deal with the media. These teachers come from traditional disciplines of language arts and social studies with an occasional communication modernist. The curriculum which develops is a negotiated set of objectives, a library of instructional materials from published and local sources, instructional approaches which integrate the materials into the home discipline (the media unit in an English class), and standard classroom evaluation.

In this curriculum there is no over-arching theoretical perspective. Each instructional objective is interpreted according to the needs of the individual classroom teacher. This private interpretation is the commonplace fate of all but the most standardized curricula. The absence of major textbook support and standardized tests guarantees this fate for any curriculum innovation. The sight of one's curriculum plan and materials being systematically reconstructed by the classroom teacher either singly or in committee is at first a shock to the academic developer. But this reconstruction is a necessary part of making the curriculum work in the individual classroom. Materials which do not lend themselves to teacher input have a history of fading from lack of teacher interest and commitment.

Prognosis

Curriculum development passes through a number of identifiable phases. In an educational system such as that in the United States, where local autonomy of school boards is still a cherised if eroding ideal, it does so with well deliberated speed. Receivership skills curricula are currently into but not beyond the initiating phase of development.

The appearance of receivership skills curricula as a regular part of the school day requires the conjunction of three forces: (1) state school officials must commit time, space and money; (2) the major textbook publishing houses must direct capital into the production and marketing of instructional materials; and (3) teacher education institutions must initiate pre-service and in-service instructional support.

One of these forces appears to be marshalling. School officials are in the pinch of an inflationary devaluation of income and the "back to basics" movement. No major textbook company has committed to any of the funded projects whose materials are available only in samizdat fashion. Teacher education institutions, upholding their position as the hoaryist of the educational establishment have hardly begun to consider the new media. Ploghoft echoes this conservative assessment in writing:

> It is relevant to comment on the fate of other educational program developments, which like critical receivership skills, were prompted by social and technological changes. Economic education, consumer education, safety education, multicultural education, career education, have not found smooth sailing by any means as their proponents have sought to gain a viable place for them in the K-12 curriculum. The resistance, or in most cases, disinterest in such curriculum developments can be attributed to a number of factors--not the least of which has been the lack of involvement of teachers and other school people in the development of program concepts.
>
> Perhaps it is for these and other reasons that the futurists in education keep their eyes directed toward the year 2020, rather than trying to figure out why education in 1979 has not yet responded to the major technological changes of the forties. Futurism of this sort is simple. We catalog the problems and concerns of today and then wisely predict that education will respond to these concerns about 50 years hence (9, p. 1-2).

Institutional social innovation is a glacial study in the absence of cataclysmic events forcing change. Communication Cassandras may caution, but we listen slowly.

SOCIAL KNOWLEDGE, CHILDREN'S PROCESSING, AND SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF VIEWING TV DRAMAS

by

W. Andrew Collins
Institute of Child Development
University of Minnesota
and Boys Town Center
for the Study of Youth Development

More than 20 years ago, three pioneering researchers into the effects of television on children concluded that:

> The chief part television plays in the lives of children depends at least as much on what the child brings to television as on what television brings to the child (Schramm, Lyle, & Parker, 1961, p. 74).

This appraisal notwithstanding, in the ensuing two decades most researchers have concerned themselves with *whether* and *in what ways* children are affected by what television brings to them (e.g., Stein & Friedrich, 1975). Much less attention has been given to the wide-ranging cognitive and predispositional characteristics that the child brings to television. This paper concerns developmental and individual differences in children's understanding of the social behaviors, roles, and relationships portrayed in many of the programs they watch and the social and educational implications of the processes involved in understanding these materials.

At this point, our understanding of *developmental* differences in skills for comprehending social portrayals is *more extensive* than our knowledge of the differential effects of individual experience and predisposition. The results of an eight-year series indicate that comprehension of televised dramatic plots is both *more limited* and *more fragmented* than adults would expect for children *as old as second and third graders*. We base these conclusions on studies of children's understanding of dramatic programs which are produced for adults, but heavily viewed by children--action adventure programs, family dramas, and situation comedies. These programs are narratives--stories made complicated enough to keep adult viewers interested--and the particulars of the plots are often subtle, inexplicit, and interspersed with extraneous or tangentially relevant material. In our studies (conducted at the Institute of Child Development at Minnesota over the past eight years) we have focused on the extent to which children of different ages remember two kinds of information from these complex television plots: (1) *discrete explicit events* that occur in single scenes of the show, *particularly those that are essential* to the sense of the plot (in that without them the story cannot be comprehensibly retold); and (2) *implicit information* that is not explicitly mentioned or depicted, but is *implied by the relations between scenes*. (An example of the latter is the fact that one discrete event may be recognizable by adults as showing the *cause* of some second discrete event; but the "because" connector is *not* explicitly mentioned, as it might well be in a written or orally presented story.) In other words, in order to comprehend the social roles, behaviors, and attitudes portrayed in typical television dramas, children must (1) select judiciously among the large number of single happenings or events that are shown, and also (2) infer the relations among these discretely presented units of information across time. We have called the latter process temporal integration (Collins, Note 1).

Developmental Differences: Memory for Discrete Scenes

When we say that comprehension of these aspects of story material is limited, we mean that young grade-school children seem to remember a significantly smaller proportion of the essential or central information that is explicitly presented in single scenes than do older children, adolescents, and adults. In one recent study (Collins, Wellman, Keniston, & Westby, 1978) we asked a panel of adult judges to help us identify the information that was absolutely essential to the plot in a half-hour action adventure television program; then we tested second, fifth, and eighth graders on this central information. Second graders recalled an average of only 66 percent of the scenes that adults had judged as essential to the plot; fifth graders recalled 84 percent of these scenes, and eighth graders recalled 92 percent--nearly all of them.

Developmental Differences in Inferences about Inter-Scene Relations

Even when children understand the content of individual scenes, however, they often fail to grasp the inter-scene relations that also carry important information in audiovisual narratives. Adults readily infer that what happens in a scene early in a program is pertinent to some later scene. For example, adults perform as you would expect in noticing the relation between an actor's malevolent intent toward another character in one scene and his violent attack on that character in a later scene. But up until about 9 or 10 years of age, most children are rather poor at inferring these kinds of causal connections and other links between scenes in programs (Collins, Berndt, & Hess, 1974; Collins, et.al., 1978); hence, our conclusion that their understanding of shows is rather fragmentary.

In the study I mentioned earlier (Collins, et.al., 1978), we tested children's knowledge for this sort of implicit information. A group of adult judges had previously agreed that the test information was important to understanding the plot of the particular program. Second graders remembered an average of fewer than half (47 percent) of the items adults had agreed upon; but fifth and eighth graders remembered 67 percent and 77 percent, respectively. These figures are not artifacts of age differences in knowledge of individual scenes; second graders often knew the discrete pieces of information required to answer the questions, but simply had not inferred the relationships between them as the older children had. You can see this in an analysis in which we were able to determine whether children knew the two discrete scenes or premises on which each of the inferences we asked about were based. We were then able to estimate the conditional probability that each child would make a correct inference, given that both of the premise scenes, or only one of them, or neither one, were known at the time the children were tested. This kind of analysis tells us the extent to which children of different ages have inferred the relatedness of discrete pieces of information from the program. The data clearly showed that the likelihood of correctly integrating important information about the plot across temporally separate, discrete scenes is relatively poor for second graders--the probability was less than 50 percent, just greater than chance. For fifth and eighth graders, it was about 75 percent. So when they knew the discrete, explicit scenes, older children were more likely to go beyond it and draw out the implied relationships between them.

Part of the difficulty for younger children seems to be that they either can't remember or don't take advantage of the information provided by temporal order. When we randomly scrambled the scenes in the program for some of the children, our second-grade viewers did no worse than when the scenes were presented in chronological order as they were outlined in the plot. But, of course, the pre-adolescents and adolescents inferred the relations between scenes considerably better when the scenes were in proper order (Collins et.al., 1978). Apparently, the older children made better use of the information conveyed by order than younger children and, thus, more readily extracted the information implied by the temporal relation of one scene to another. Our characterization of understanding as "limited and fragmentary," then, comes from these findings that the adult-defined importance of scenes and their temporal order makes relatively little difference to preschool and young grade-school viewers.

These developmental differences have emerged in studies of a number of different programs of different types--not only action adventure shows, but situation comedies and family dramas, as well. As in comprehension of other kinds of materials, these developmental differences appear to reflect age-related emergence of spontaneous strategies for "going beyond the information given"--in this case, information that bears on the social learning than often occurs in typical viewing (Stein & Friedrich, 1975).

The Nature of Young Children's Comprehension

What, then, do young grade-school children take away from typical programs, granting that--compared to older viewers--they generally comprehend less of the narrative-essential explicit and implicit content? Some of our recent analyses indicate that their representation of programs is heavily affected by their expectations about persons and sequences of events that are based on prior experiences, including television viewing. For example, in the study that I've been describing above, two-thirds of the second, fifth, and eighth graders we tested were interrupted at one or the other of two points during their viewing of the particular version of the stimulus program to which they had been assigned. The interruptions came at points that had previously been agreed upon by adult raters as suspense points--scenes after which something noteworthy was obviously going to happen. When we stopped the videotape at these points, we asked the children to tell us what they thought was going to happen next. We then coded their predictions according to whether or not they mentioned previous events from the program in explaining their answers. We were not interested in whether their predictions were accurate. The majority of the fifth and eighth graders (78 percent and 68 percent, respectively) predicted events that invoked, or followed from, plot occurrences prior to interruption. For example, following a scene in which the protagonist met a panhandler who resembled the man he had killed, relevant predictions often involved the likelihood that the confused murderer would react as though the man were his earlier victim. ("He'll think he didn't kill the wino and will go after this guy"). Second graders rarely (28 percent of the cases) predicted events that followed from the pre-interruption scenes.

Instead, they relied on stereotypes of action sequences. A typical stereotyped prediction made by these children was that, instead of giving the old panhandler the quarter he asked for, the villain would "grab his hand and flip him or something."

In many respects, of course, the action sequences that young children cite instead of recounting what actually happened in a program are high-probability occurrences that can aid in understanding observed behavior. They are instances of what Schank and Abelson (1977) have recently called scripts--groupings of actions that are called into play when key parts of the actions or characteristic settings are encountered. For example, in the instance of the killer and the panhandler, knowing that a villain meets another character under tense circumstances suggests a script in which the villain attacks the other physically: "He'll probably grab him and flip him or something." Older viewers undoubtedly also know these stereotypes, but they also test their appropriateness against the particulars of shows. In other words, we think that younger viewers probably adhere rigidly to the scripts available to them in processing the content of televised narratives, either not noticing or ignoring the program events that do not conform to their scripts. For them, the scripts may actually displace the observed content to determine what is "known" about the show. Older viewers may well accept scripts initially, but actively compare the particulars of the show to their scripted expectations. For them, deviation from the scripts may actually signify that an event is important and worthy of being remembered.

In fact, we asked children in the study I've been describing to retell the narrative for us so that someone would be able to tell what happened in the show. My collaborator, Henry Wellman, has recently examined their protocols for the presence of items of content that had been reliably categorized by adults into two groups: (1) content that reflected common scripts available to viewers of all ages, even the very young; and (2) content that was peculiar to the stimulus show. As you can see from Table 1, among second graders the mean proportion of children who mentioned the content that fit scripts readily available to all age groups was .79, but the mean proportion of these younger children who mentioned the more specialized knowledge was only .12. Fifth and eighth graders were just as likely as the younger children to mention the stereotyped knowledge, but many more fifth graders and eighth graders than second graders mentioned the program-specific knowledge--.55 and .98 were the relevant mean proportions in fifth and eighth grades, respectively, compared to .12 for second graders.

In short, then, our working hypothesis is that younger children's representations of typical televised narratives are heavily colored by the scripts available to them, which often causes them to short-circuit their attention to unique, essential features of dramatic plots. This may be consequential for their social learning in cases where reliance on stereotyped knowledge could result in misleading impressions of actors and their behaviors--for example, in the case of the commonly portrayed double-dealing character whose appearance may initially project a script for benevolent behavior, but actually be revealed, subtly and by small increments, to be malevolent instead.

TABLE 1

Proportions of Children Who Mentioned Common-Knowledge and Program-Specific Contents in Retelling the Televised Narrative

Grade	Common-Knowledge Content				Program-Specific Content		
	Police	Murder	Bad Guy Caught	Buying Groceries	Show Premise	Villian's Crime	Forgery
Second	9/17	12/17	15/15	16/17	2/17	3/17	1/17
Fifth	10/19	14/19	19/19	19/19	7/19	12/19	12/19
Eighth	3/14	12/14	12/14	14/14	13/14	14/14	14/14

Effects of Individual Differences in Pertinent Social Experiences

We have also begun to see evidence of individual differences in understanding of typical televised dramas--differences that can be attributed to different social experiences and predispositions of the individual children within the youngest group in our research. For example, Andrew Newcomb and I have recently published evidence (Newcomb & Collins, 1979) that young viewers' difficulties on our measures--both of memory for discrete scenes in programs and of understanding the informative links or relations among scenes within shows--appear to be especially great when they are watching programs that involve characters and settings somewhat different from their own experience. In other words, if they see portrayals that don't fit their social "sets" or "schemes"--their expectations about how people will act and interact--young viewers may be even less likely to understand the characters' actions, motives, and feelings.

We studied equal numbers of children from both lower-socioeconomic and middle-scioeconomic samples at grades two, five, and eight. One set of children (including all of these subgroups) viewed an edited version of a commercial network show featuring middle-class characters. The second set of participants saw a show with a similar plot line featuring lower-class characters. Family composition and the complexity of the programs were similar, and the two memory tests we constructed seemed to be of similar degrees of difficulty.

When we tested these children for understanding of the events and--more particularly--the inferred causes of action and the emotions of the characters, we found that the second-grade children did somewhat better when the social-class milieu being portrayed in the program was similar to their own backgrounds. Figure 1 shows these results. Middle-SES second graders who viewed the middle-class show inferred more about the causes of actions and the feelings and emotions of the characters than lower-SES youngsters who watched the middle-class show; and lower-SES second graders who watched the lower-class character show inferred more of the same kind of information from that show than did the middle-class children who watched the lower-class show. These effects don't show up at the fifth- and eighth-grade levels. In short, for the younger children with more limited cognitive skills for understanding what happens in a television show, seeing the action portrayed in settings similar to their own backgrounds helped them acquire relevant information from the program. Their general difficulties in comprehending shows, which we have attributed to developmental factors, were most evident when there was no special similarity of television to their own experience. In other words, second graders' difficulties in comprehending typical television content may reside partly in their lack of familiarity with the types of roles, characters, and settings portrayed in many adult entertainment programs. The fact that SES is, at the least, a rather gross indicator of the scripts that might be familiar to children underscores the striking nature of this finding.

Why does the match between general social experience and TV portrayal affect younger viewers' understanding so strikingly? Apparently, some prior experience with or knowledge of basic information about the material to be remembered facilitates comprehension of additional, related content judging from the findings of studies of different types of memory tasks (Chi, 1978; Trabasso & Foellinger, 1978). Perhaps the ease with which certain key information in a new task can be assimilated because of prior materials

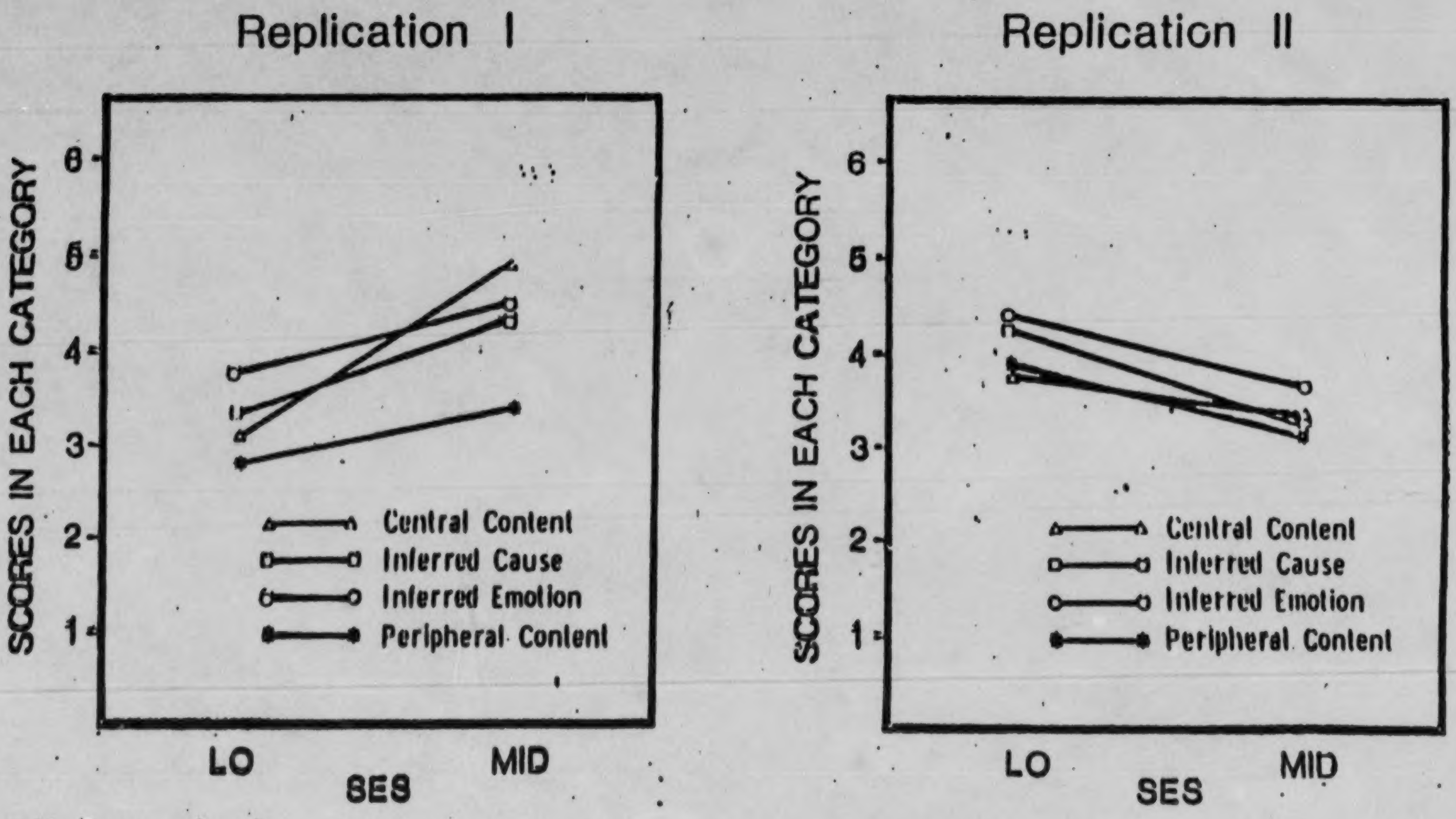


Figure 1. Mean correct answers on explicit- and implicit-content recognition items for middle- and lower- SES second graders who watched middle-class characters (Replication I) or working-class characters (Replication II) (From Newcomb & Collins, 1979).

indicates deeper processing (Craik & Lockhart, 1972) than occurs with relatively unfamiliar tasks. It may also be that younger viewers' similarity to the characters and setting in the programs actually motivated them to attend more closely to the details of the portrayals than did less similar viewers. Young observers faced with a complex presentation from which some materials must be selected might be especially susceptible to such motivational effects of experience.

Despite the salutary effects of pertinent social experience for second graders, nevertheless, the preadolescent and adolescent viewers in the study again appeared to use selective and inferential strategies more effectively than the younger children, regardless of the presumed familiarity of the type of program they watched. In fact, we found that even the best performing second graders were still significantly poorer than fifth and eighth graders. Furthermore, we computed conditional probabilities to determine whether, if the children knew the central explicit content of the scenes, they were also likely to know the implicit content--the causes of actions and the emotional states of actors. These probabilities were significantly higher for fifth graders than for second graders, indicating that the important information implied by what occurs on the screen was more likely to be grasped by older viewers than by younger ones.

Some Implications and Prospects

The finding that young viewers are relatively unlikely to infer relationships among cues like motives and consequences even when they are apparently well understood, separately suggests two implications for further reflection and investigation. One question is whether the nature of children's errors can provide a basis for helping younger viewers understand complex programs on television better than they would on their own. For instance, parents might deliberately attempt to induce children to infer the interrelationships among important scenes in the program that the children often do not infer spontaneously, and these attempts might take account of the tendency for younger viewers' errors to resort to stereotyped social sequences for their understanding of what is portrayed, rather than spontaneously seeking the relevant information within the program. School curricula might be developed to teach viewing strategies, with an emphasis on inducing children to ask themselves the implicit questions that appear to be spontaneous in older children's viewing behavior (Collins, 1978) and to test whether and how portrayals differ from their own experiences. Research is needed on the effectiveness of such interventions and on the possible remediating value for behavioral effects of television.

A second, more general implication of the present research is that the primary risk of possible deleterious social and behavioral effects of age-related comprehension differences accrues to younger viewers in the child audience. Although the extent of this risk cannot be accurately estimated, there is little doubt that it is relatively greater for them than for adolescents and adults. For a more complete understanding of the role of comprehension, however, it will be necessary to consider children's comprehension of television content in interaction with a number of age-related and individual differences in children's responses. For example, possible age-related increases in discrimination between fantasy and reality, the effects of individual variables like arousal thresholds and aggression anxiety, and the variance due to the situations that comprise children's everyday experiences are all relevant to the way in which age variation in television content may be expected to enter the complex equation for television effects. This more elaborate approach to the nature and importance of what the child brings to television is basic to a fuller appreciation of the significance of this medium in the development of individual children.

REFERENCE NOTES

1. Collins, W. A. Temporal integration and inferences about televised social behavior. Paper presented as part of a symposium on Cognitive Processing of Television Content: Perspectives on the Effects of Television on Children, at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, New Orleans, March, 1977.

REFERENCES

Chi, M. Knowledge structures and memory development. In R. Siegler (Ed.), *Children's thinking: What develops?* Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1978.

Collins, W. A., Berndt, T., and Hess, V. Observational learning of motives and consequences for television aggression: a developmental study. *Child Development*, 1974, *45*, 799-802.

Collins, W. A., Wellman, H., Keniston, A., and Westby, S. Age-related aspects of comprehension of televised social content. *Child Development*, 1978, *49*, 389-399.

Craik, F., and Lockhart, R. Levels of processing: A framework for memory research. *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior*, 1972, *11*, 671-684.

Newcomb, A. F., and Collins, W. A. Children's comprehension of family role portrayals in televised dramas: Effects of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and age. *Developmental Psychology*, 1979, *15*, 417-423.

Schank, R., and Abelson, R. *Scripts, plans, goals, and understanding.* Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1977.

Schramm, W., Lyle, J., and Parker, E. *Television in the lives of our children.* Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1961.

Stein, A., and Friedrich, L. Impact of television on children and youth. In E. M. Hetherington (Ed.), *Review of child development research*, Vol. 5, 1975, pp. 183-256. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Trabasso, T., and Foellinger, D. The growth of information processing capacity in children: A critical test of Pascual-Leonix's model. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 1978, *26*, 1-17.

TV AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT: STRUCTURING THE VISUAL DIMENSION

by

Francis M. Dwyer, Senior Research Associate
The Pennsylvania State University

Orientation

There is a growing awareness that although television has the potential for providing a rich variety of stimulating resources, its impact in terms of facilitating academic achievement has not been realized. Two possible explanations may be suggested to account for this lack of instructional effectiveness. First, television viewing in the home has created in viewers a passive set which is oriented toward relaxation and entertainment. This set accompanies students and creates a negative predisposition when they are located in an environment where television is the medium of instruction. The second, and perhaps greatest, limitation associated with instructional television has been its failure to employ systematically and fully guidelines and principles derived from research and learning theory which can provide structure for the conditions which are necessary for desired kinds of learning to occur.

Even though producers of instructional programming have totally different kinds of objectives to achieve than do producers of commercial television (cognitive vs. informational), unfortunately their production techniques do not differ significantly. Furthermore, they do not know how to identify different types of learning, nor do they know how to structure the learning environment differentially to insure optimum student achievement of different educational objectives.

Needed Guidelines for Visualization

Despite the fact that television is a predominately visual medium, producers have little knowledge relative to the instructional effectiveness of different types of visual materials, both from the standpoint of how learners react to variations in the amount and kinds of stimulation contained within the various types of visual media, and how visuals differing in the amount of realistic detail influence learner achievement of different educational objectives. For example, in the design of a typical instructional lesson, how would the responses of a producer/developer to the following questions influence the lesson's structure?

1. Are all types of visual materials equally effective in facilitating student achievement of all types of educational objectives?

2. Does the amount of time students are permitted to interact with visualized instruction affect their level of achievement of different educational objectives?

3. Are identical types of visual illustrations equally effective for all education levels, or do different types of visual illustrations possess differing degrees of instructional effectiveness for students

at different educational levels and for different educational objectives?

4. Are different cueing techniques (motion, inserted questions, knowledge of specific learning objectives, etc.) equally effective in complementing visualized instruction?

5. What effect do specific individual difference variables (intelligence, reading comprehension, education level, etc.) have on students' ability to profit from different types of lesson development?

6. What kinds of visual materials--in what patterns, combinations, and sequences--provide the best stimulus conditions for maximum achievement of specific kinds of educational objectives?

7. How does the type of feedback and/or reinforcement that students receive in progressing through a televised lesson affect their level of a achievement of different kinds of educational objectives?

8. How does students' prior knowledge in a content area influence their ability to profit from a televised presentation?

Research on Visualized Instruction

In an attempt to answer these types of questions, over one hundred studies have been conducted by the author and his associates in a program of systematic evaluation (Dwyer, 1978). The sample population involved in the studies represents over 4,000 high school students (ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades) and over 25,000 college-level students. Specifically, a number of important conclusions emerge from the studies regarding the effective use of visual materials in the teaching-learning environment (Dwyer, 1978, 96-97).

1. All types of visual materials are not equally effective in facilitating student achievement. For example, an increase in the amount of realistic detail contained in an illustration will not produce a corresponding increase in the amount of information a student will acquire from it.

2. All types of visual materials are not equally effective in facilitating student achievement of different educational objectives. The type of visual material most effective in transmitting information is dependent upon the type of information to be transmitted.

3. For specific students and for specific educational objectives, the use of color in certain types of visuals appears to be an important instructional variable in improving student achievement. For other educational objectives, however, the added cost of color may not be justified from the instructional effectiveness standpoint.

4. All types of cueing techniques do not equally facilitate the instructional effectiveness of different types of visual materials; some types of cueing techniques are significantly more effective than others.

5. Boys and girls in the same grade level (high school) learn equally well from identical types of visual materials.

6. The effectiveness of a particular type of visual in facilitating student achievement of a specific educational objective depends, in part, on the amount of time students are permitted to interact with the visualized instruction.

7. The use of visuals specifically designed to complement oral instruction does not automatically improve student achievement. However, for certain types of educational objectives the use of visuals designed to complement a particular instructional strategy and to facilitate achievement of a specific educational objective will increase student achievement of the objective.

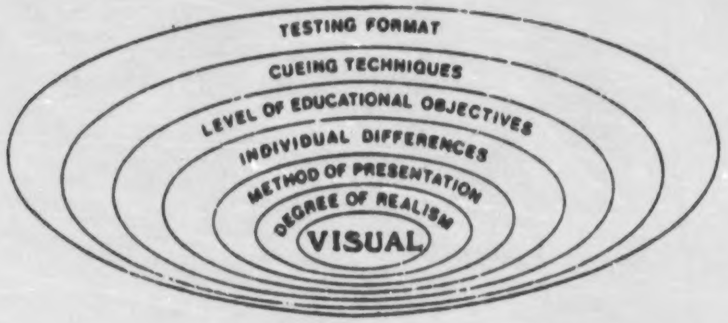
8. The use of specific types of visual illustrations to facilitate specific types of educational objectives significantly improves student achievement.

9. Identical visual illustrations are not equally effective in facilitating the achievement of students possessing different I.Q. levels, reading comprehension levels, and/or prior knowledge levels in the content area.

10. For students in different grade levels the same visual materials are not equally effective in increasing achievement of identical educational objectives.

Research on the structure of visualized instruction has progressed significantly since the early comparative-effectiveness studies in which single isolated variables were assessed to determine their potential influences on student achievement. The experimental results accumulated in the program of systematic evaluation is considered to represent a departure from the fragmented research which in the past has failed to contribute to a cumulative analysis of the role of visualization in the instructional process. The data analysis from studies conducted in this program substantiate the fact that the human being is a very complex organism and that the variables which influence learning are likewise extremely complex. General findings from the program of systematic evaluation indicate that the present method of selecting and using visual materials for instructional purposes are grossly ineffective. The specific effectiveness of a visual learning environment is primarily dependent upon: (a) the amount of realistic detail contained in the type of visualization used; (b) the method by which the visualized instruction is presented by students (externally paced vs. self-paced); (c) student characteristics, i.e., intelligence, prior knowledge in the content area, reading and/or oral comprehension level, etc.; (d) the type or level of educational objective to be achieved by the students; (e) the technique used to focus student attention on the essential learning characterized in the visualized materials, e.g., cues such as questions, arrows, motion, verbal/visual feedback, overt/covert responses, etc.; and, (f) the type of test format employed to assess student information acquisition, e.g., for certain types of educational objectives visual tests have been found to provide more valid assessments of the amount of information students acquire by means of visualized instruction (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. Variables associated with visualized instruction.



Discussion

In acknowledging the complexity of the teaching-learning environment it seems apparent that it is going to be almost impossible to identify or construct a single theory for guiding the effective integration of visual stimuli into the instructional (television) process. Probably the most that can be expected is the development of situational guidelines to govern the selection and use of different types of visual materials. Although there are limits in students' differences beyond which a particular stimulus is not appropriate, usually a given type of visualization will be suitable across a wide range of individual difference variables.

Research has already provided evidence to support the fact that if quality instructional programs are to be designed, developed and produced, questions similar to the following need to be asked and answered in the planning stages.

1. What types of educational objectives are to be achieved by the students? What are students expected to be able to do as a result of participating in the instructional lesson?

2. What individual difference characteristics appear to be related logically to student performance and which of these should be taken into consideration in the pilot testing program?

3. How is the visualized instruction to be presented to the students, that is, will the televised instruction be presented to students in a group learning environment or will it be available for self-paced instruction via individually controlled video cassette?

4. What types of stimuli characteristics should the visuals contain?

5. What types of evaluation (testing) formats are to be employed?

6. What types of cueing or attention gaining (and sustaining) techniques will be incorporated in the visualized portion of the lesson?

In the typical visualized instructional situation, learning is a continuous process which is being influenced at any one time by a multitude of dimensional variables. Consequently, the process of synthesizing isolated bits and pieces of research evidence in order to construct a matrix of instructional variables and guidelines for the use of specific types of visualization seems to lie somewhere in the future. However, research (Dwyer, 1978) has been and currently is in the process of being conducted which can be used by educators to answer questions (similar to the following) which are necessary for the creation of effective learning environments.

1. How are visual cues perceived, organized and processed?

2. What combinations of cueing strategies are most effective in facilitating student achievement of complex learning objectives?

3. What kinds of visualization used singly or in combinations are most effective in facilitating student achievement of different educational objectives?

4. Under what conditions do visualized messages optimize information transmission?

5. How are visual cues perceived, organized and processed?

6. What kinds of test formats are most appropriate for assessing student information acquisition of different educational objectives?

7. What kinds of visualization increase and sustain attention and concentration?

LEARNING FROM TELEVISION: WHAT ARE THE LIMITS?

by

Dr. David Jonassen
The University of North Carolina

That television can teach is generally regarded as an unassailable truth. "The evidence that children can and do learn from television is impressive" (Comstock, et.al. 1978). Literally thousands of studies have sustained its efficacy relative to teachers or other media. However, if we closely examine many of the assumptions about learning from television, we must conclude that either its potential has not been realized or that there are limits to its capability to teach. What is needed is a firm theoretical base in learning to support either of these contentions. Are the symbolic codes implicit in the medium capable of calling on only a limited number of mental skills? Does the behavior modeled from television presuppose only limited cognitive activity? While television has been proven effective in eliciting various types of learning, those types need to be clarified and its limitations explicated so that educators will not be further frustrated by television's inability to solve many learning problems, despite its popularity, ubiquity, or presumed communication potential.

Passivity Does Not Recapitulate Activity

The most prevalent use of television is for the communication of cognitive content (Leifer, 1976). This assumes that television stimulates cognition and learning. It does, but that learning is passive, requiring low levels of attention and cognitive activity. It is a continuous absorption of images that stimulates certain physiological activity regardless of program content. Learning frequently involves higher level cognitive processes (reasoning, thinking and problem solving) that require active participation in learning, such as decoding, selecting strategies, and organizing information. Learning is an interactive process, while television is a passive, receptive process. Much of the pre-processing of information that would normally require cognitive activity has been accomplished by the medium for the learner. Since passive learning produces an absence of aroused resistence to what is learned, passive learning can occur so long as the material is acceptable (Krugman and Hartley, 1970). This probably accounts for the innocuousness of much television programming, even instructional programming. Krugman and Hartley further contend that for many, attention to and learning about serious matters on TV can only be done calmly, without excitation and effort. But learning is most effective when attention is aroused, when learners are active and involved, when learning is participative.

Knowledge results from personal experience--the extraction of information from the environment through the senses. Learning involves the interpetation of meaning from this unorganized, often overload of sensory information, i.e., the construction of a personal reality. Learning requires the learner to selectively attend to environmental stimuli in order to make sense of it. This is considered by most cognitive psychologists an ongoing, active, constructive mental process. Television--like all media--interprets, refines, and packages those environmental events for the viewer. Selection of stimuli is done by the medium. In doing so, it mediates experience; "it both confines experience and implants simple, clear ideas" (Mander, 1978, p. 97). Television supplants many of the thought processes we normally associate with learning, reducing the mental activity in the viewer to the passive reception of continuously coded sense impressions. Is such a process advantageous or disadvantageous for learning?

Learning From Television

Learning can occur from all forms of television--commercial, public, videotaped lessons, etc. Instructional television and educational television are produced for the explicit purpose of stimulating learning, whereas commercial television purportedly entertains us. Learning from the former shall be indicated as *intentional* learning--that resulting from clearly defined and purposive instructional procedures. Learning from the latter is *incidental*, serendipitous learning. Such learning can result from both commercial and instructional television. Intentional learning is normally considered the domain of instructional television; however, commercial advertising messages can be considered reasonably intentional in nature. This intentionality is reflected in a sizeable body of research.

Since its inception in the early fifties, the effectiveness of educational/instructional television has been the subject of hundreds of studies. Reviews of these (Chu & Schramm, 1967; Dubin & Headley, 1969; Reid & MacLennan, 1967; Stickell, 1963) generally found no significant differences between the television instruction and traditional classroom instruction (probably because the TV lesson was doing the same thing as the classroom teacher). In a longer retrospective, Jamieson, Suppes, and Wells (1974) corroborated earlier findings (Gropper & Lumsdaine, 1961) that television alone was not effective in carrying the entire weight of teaching, that in combination with other media it was more effective than either medium alone, and that active responding (programming) will best facilitate learning from television. This comes as no suprise in light of the active/passive distinction elucidated earlier and the noted sanguine effects of mathemagenic behaviors such as inserted questions on intentional learning.

How does learning evolve from television? What types of content can be learned from TV in addition to that requiring display motion (Spangenberg, 1971)? Comstock and associates (1978) contend that the necessary conditions for learning from television include *attention*, *comprehension*, and *retention*. These conditions are affected by child (viewer) related factors such as developmental state and personality; stimulus-related factors such as program characteristics/production techniques; and environment-related factors such as viewing conditions. Most of the available research has focused on the first two. The interaction of viewer characteristics and learning effects constitutes the major focus. Another body of research has dealt with production techniques that attract and maintain attention while increasing retention (Lesser, 1974). Less data are available on the effects of environmental variables on attention, comprehension and retention. Since this study is focusing on learning, viewer characteristics are more germane.

What mental abilities are necessary for learning from television? The ability to learn from television is related to the child's overall mental development. As children develop their ability to selectively attend to information inputs, they become more capable of learning from television, to a point. Collins (1970) found that for essential content, learning increases linearly with age, but for nonessential content, the relationship was curvilinear, leveling off at about the sixth-grade level (Hale, Miller, & Stevenson, 1968). This would indicate limits to the nature of mental processes that interact with television images. Ward and Wackman (1973) identified two that distinguish betw en preoperational and concrete operational stages of development, according to Piaget's theory: perceptual boundedness, the tendency in children to respond to their immediate environment; and centration, the tendency to focus on a limited part of information available. Ward and Wickman found that younger children operate on only a few perceptual dimensions of the television display. They are more capable of differentiation in attention to television. These findings are consistent with Piagetian theory. In fact, facilitating the transition from preoperational thought to concrete operations is one of the primary theoretical concerns of SESAME STREET (Fowles & Vogat, 1973).

Can it be reasonably hypothesized, based on this and similar literature, that concrete operations define the limits of learning from television, that the mental operations developed at this stage are most consonant with the presentational capacity of television? Viewers are called upon to selectively attend (decentration) to multiple perceptual dimensions (imboundness) of concrete imagery presented on the screen. Concrete operations, such as reversibility, allow viewers to interpret (to perform logical operations) the common television metaphors. Or has no one yet been able to use the medium to promote higher level learning?

No literature supports the teaching of formal operations by television. Television instruction has been found to motivate students to engage in problem solving (Galey & George, 1974) and to improve their attitudes about problem solving (O'Brien, 1973), but no consistent evidence is available to support television's ability to teach problem solving or other propositional forms of thought. Television is a presentational medium possessing sophisticated means of visual display that can stimulate perceptual, attentional, and interpetive behavior. But it can only use these to present information. Its ability to stimulate or engender higher forms of learning, if it exists, has not been proven.

Comstock and others (1978), following the most exhaustive review of television literature ever conducted (Comstock & Fisher, 1975), cited a variety of types of learning produced by instructional and commercial television--"knowledge of the Constitution," "information source," "television exposure increased knowledge," "facts essential to the plot," "sequence of events," in addition to its social lessons--"learning norms about behavior," and "changed attitudes." That television is capable of producing such learning is not particularly distinctive; so is every medium and/or presentational strategy capable of stimulating recall behavior. The real issue is whether such qualified utilization results from inherent limitations or a lack of understanding in its producers. To answer that, we need to look at how learning does result from television viewing.

Learning From Models

The overwhelming majority of television research has focused on the effects of violence on television viewers, especially children. Comstock (1976) concluded from hundreds of studies that "viewing violence increases the likelihood of some form of subsequent aggressiveness" (p. 7). The scope of such studies expanded to include prosocial as well as aggressive behavior. In an archetypal study, Friedrich and Stein (1973) showed that watching shows considered violent, such as SUPERMAN and BATMAN, caused preschoolers to become more aggressive, disobedient, anxious and generally restive, while shows considered prosocial, such as MR. ROGERS, resulted in decreases in aggression, greater tolerance, persistence, and obedience. How were these messages received? What caused these changes in behavior? Do such behavioral changes constitute learning?

As previously propounded, television is a presentational medium which is designed for passive reception, i.e., observation. Children learn from television by observing and emulating its images. TV assumes some level of viewer identification with the characters or objects being presented--the more empathetic the better. Observational learning produces three different effects following observation of a model (Bandura & Walters, 1963). The disinhibiting effect results in the increase in frequency of behaviors already possessed by the observer, but that are inhibited by anxiety. An eliciting effect causes an increase in behaviors already in the observer's repertoire that are just not likely to occur, but not blocked by anxiety. The majority of social learning attributed to television, especially commercial television, is of this variety. Aggressiveness is not a behavior unique to television. Neither are benevolence, tolerance, and understanding. They are behaviors that for various reasons are not exhibited as frequently as they should be (or are exhibited too frequently). Observing such behavior on television or observing the reinforcing effect or inhibiting effect on TV models may reinforce or inhibit the occurrence of such behavior in real life.

The third effect of observational learning is modeling which results from the acquisition of a behavior not formerly possessed by the observer. It is this effect that holds the potential of learning and not simply the stimulation of existing behavior patterns. A number of studies have reported changes in cognitive functioning. Children have demonstrated changes in interrogative strategy from television models, using more complex, constraint-seeking questions in searching for answers (Denney, 1972, 1974). Observation of television models has also produced modeling of cognitive styles, producing changes in conceptual style from relational to analytical (Denney, 1972a) and change in cognitive tempo from impulsive to reflective (Debus, 1970; Denney, 1972a). Many of these changes generalized to non-experimental tasks and some persisted over time. Modeling can produce changes in cognitive behavior, i.e., it "may initiate or instigate known behavior but not, in any simple manner, produce learning" (Olson & Bruner, 1974, p. 137). Even after producing hypothesized results Denney (1972b) questioned whether the mere presentation of a model is sufficient for the acquisition of a new conceptual strategy. He concluded the absence of a true learning effect from modeling.

Observational learning is based on imitation theory, of which there are several competing versions. The theory most commonly used to explain observational learning effects from television (Comstock, et al., 1978) is an instrumental conditioning theory (Bandura, 1969) which conceives of imitation as a two-stage process: acquisition (attaining the ability to perform), and performance. As an associative process, such observational learning is contingent on both temporal contiguity and reinforcement of models of stimulus and imitative behavior. Kuhn (1973) criticizes the ambiguity of the acquisition phase of the proposed theory, which is totally dependent on performance to indicate its presence. Another weakness is the necessity of reinforcement to the process, since much observational learning in natural settings occurs in the absence of reinforcement. Such a theory of observational learning severely limits the type of learning that can result from viewing television. It reduces learning to a mechanistic, associative process whereby the viewer copies the behavior (not the thought process, reasoning, intention or other internal mental process) of the TV model without regard to its importance, inference or meaning. Such reflections may occur, but the focus is on the acquisition and reinforcement of overt behavior which does not presuppose any higher cognitive processes.

A more contemporary imitation theory (Kuhn, 1973) sees "imitation as one form of overall cognitive functioning, rather than a special mechanism for the acquisition of novel responses" (p. 157). Such a theory is inherently constructive, conceiving of imitation as a general, developmental transformation in cognitive structure through accommodation to a modeled object or behavior. It assumes, unlike behavioral imitation theory, that the observer imitates models that they are capable of comprehending and that are in some way related to what they know. It is inherently more individualistic, which seems to limit its applicability to the monolithic messages broadcast by television. Cognitive theory implies that imitation, if it occurs, would be more meaningful, i.e., it would represent an attempt by the viewer to structure his or her environment. For purposes of learning, it implies the transmission of individual messages to viewers, an event frequently encountered on television. Fowles and Voyat attempted to apply, in a post hoc fashion, such a theoretical perspective to Children's Television Workshop productions and to generate hypotheses for improved TV formats that would cause disequilibrium between the assimilation and accommodation functions in children, stimulating adaptive mental behavior. Such activity or interactions with the medium are requisite for the development of symbolic functions in children. Television remains a means for modeling behavior--and an effective one. Acquisition of model responses does result from television viewing. Viewers do engage in modeled behavior. The implications for complex learning, however, are limited.

The Supplantation and Cultivation of Mental Skills

The most promising area of television research to date is only now emerging. It involves the differential effects of television formats on cognitive processes--not simply those production techniques eliciting the highest level of attention (Lesser, 1974) or imaginativeness of play and concentration (Tower, et.al., 1977), but physical manipulations by the medium that stimulate the mental transformations of the viewer. Based on the premises that knowledge is always mediated by human activity in its transfer and that such activity implicitly acts to bias such knowledge (Olson & Bruner, 1974), the study of television consists of the consideration of the symbolic code through which it mediates knowledge. To extract knowledge from television, or any other medium, one is required to remodify, overcome, or correct any modifications resulting from the codes (transformations or bases or raw content) used by the medium, which calls into play specified mental activities (Salomon & Cohen, 1977). Television is distinctive in its ability to "visually show a transformation which is analogous, or even similar, to what ought to take place in our minds" (Salomon, 1976, p. 27). It is predicted on some isomorphism between communicational codes (plentiful in television) and internal, mental codes (Salomon, 1978). This similarity of television's symbolic codes to covert mental operations suggests two uses for such media codes. They call on mental skills, i.e., activate the appropriate operations needed to correct or remodify biases imposed by TV codes. They may also supplant mental operations by overtly presenting a coded simulation of the mental transformation or operation that would have to (but normally not) be internally performed by the viewer in order to understand the communication. The results of either of these applications would be the facilitation of learning or communication of content as well as the cultivation of mental skills in the learner, enabling the viewer to generalize mental operations stimulated or simulated by the media codes. Different formats such as zooming (Salomon, 1974) and fragmenting space, closeups, zooms, logical gaps (Salomon & Cohen, 1977) have found to affect differentially the mental skills called into play. The supplantation of skills has enabled learners to develop initial mastery of requisite skills, giving them a more even start with those who had already mastered such skills. Knowledge acquisition, according to Salomon's theory, is a function of the interaction between the mental requirements of any communication format and the learner's mastery of relevant or isomorphic mental skills. So, for learning from television, the learner need not have mastered the necessary skills for they can be supplanted by the medium. By stimulating these mental operations, the medium can help the learner cultivate these skills and better utilize the medium. At the risk of becoming too atomistic, the same theory might be used to assess the mental operations or transformations called upon by the various field forces present in most television images. Metallinos (1979) describes several of these, such as asymmetry of screen, main director, attraction of mass, figure/ground, closure, and vectors.

While Salomon's work represents one of the most significant developments in television research, it does not tend to expand the capabilities of television for learning so much as explain how it has always worked. It does suggest numerous specific applications of the medium for correcting, supplanting, or stimulating certain encoding/decoding skills. However, most of these skills are developmental, and fully matured in most learners by high school. Therefore, television is more applicable to the elementary schooling, as suggested by Chu and Schramm (1967). The mental operations that Salomon alludes to primarily describe interpretive operations that simply assign meaning to images through the use of the codes and various isomorphic operations, i.e., it creates temporary changes in assimilative schemata, to use cognitive terminology.

Television and the symbolic codes it possesses constitute a language. Languages primarily serve only a tool function for other forms of thinking. The codes available to television are not capable of calling upon or supplanting higher order mental operations. They are presentational in nature and assimilated by the viewer through a process of imitation and internalization (Salomon & Cohen, 1976), the initial associative processes in verbal language acquisition. Salomon (1978) suggests that observational learning is the mechanism through which these codes become internalized. Observational learning, as we have seen, is merely a means for behavioral imitation. Salomon has shown that certain mental skills can be simulated by television that serve to facilitate encoding, decoding and transfer of knowledge and probably even understanding and interpetation of meanings, though the nature of such mental connections has not been explicated. It remains to be proven that television possesses any potential for manipulating or applying knowledge, reasoning or thinking. Creating lasting changes in the cognitive structures of viewers or in corresponding accommodative operations has not been manifested by TV images.

Summary

Television is a presentational medium. Its predominantly visual representation of reality most closely corresponds to Bruner's iconic model of mental representation (Bruner, Goodnow, & Austin, 1956), i.e., its imagery provides viewers with mental representations that they can use to construct reality. Unlike its verbal language analogue, the visual language of television can provide mental constructs that do not necessarily stimulate symbolic representational activity for their confirmation (Bruner, et.al., 1956). Television's potential for producing learning is limited to the types of skills that are implicitly iconic in nature, i.e., those that can be observed and overtly imitated or those in which decoding and interpretation of knowledge are facilitated by visual mediators. For lessons requiring overt behavior that can be modeled or interpetation of knowledge, television offers some unique potential. Otherwise, it is capable only of presenting other artistic forms, such as drama and literature, which possess their own symbolic codes. For teaching facts, as it has so often been used, television is generally no better capable than any other medium. For teaching complex thought processes, its presentational nature enables it only to display the problem or overtly model the behavioral indicators of thought processes. Instructional series such as INFINITY FACTORY and the newer THINK ABOUT rely upon all of these techniques for teaching problem skills. No evidence exists to support the ability cf such observational learning techniques for cultivating or supplanting those skills. In applying a cognitive developmental model to the design of television instruction, Fowles and Voyat sought to organize and sequence the presentation of material into "experience" consonant with the nature of the required mental operation. Such "experiences," while stimulating mental processes, are vicarous and require modeling. The only opportunity for transcending the imitational mode of thought is by structuring the television presentation in such a way as to "trigger" constructive mental activity. The Children's Television Workshop has successfully employed the technique of anticipation to elicit response by the viewer, but the behavior is associative and not at all constructive. Programming a passive presentation in such a way as to elicit abstract mental activity from a large audience with individual cognitive and motivational differences is at best speculative. Problem solving is dependent on complex, formal mental operations, such as propositional logic and inferencing, that cannot successfully be modeled. These shows no doubt improve attitudes toward inquiry, as shown before, but no symbolic codes exist in television to simulate or teach such thinking. Those operations cannot be internalized simply by observing them.

The implications of this paper are obvious. Television is no miracle medium, as previously hoped or attributed. However, it is inherently expensive. The instructional television planning process must first consider instructional goals that are addressed and whether television possesses the symbolic codes to facilitate that type of learning. In the past, consideration of the medium has preceded the message. We now need to analyze the message to see if the medium fits it.

The implications for this conference may be that for learning from television, there may need be no critical viewing skills. As a form of teaching, advertising seems to understand television's codes. After determining the perceptual and visual languaging skills that affect television viewing and how messages are perceived, those skills can be called upon or supplanted by the television program to bring about intended learning. For school learning, which is assumed to be more formal and intentional, television instruction has limited instructional potential. While it possesses obvious distributional advantages, i.e., it is capable of delivering instructional messages to various populations in disparate locations, its ability to affect a wide variety of learning is questionable. If our instructional purpose is to deliver factual learning, television is as capable as any other medium. If distribution is a problem, television is more capable. Television needs to be exploited for its advantages and ignored for its weaknesses.

REFERENCES

Bandura, A. Principles of behavior modification. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1969.

Bandura, A. and Walters, R.H. Social learning and personality development. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1963.

Bruner, J., Goodnow, J.J., and Austin, G.A. A study of thinking. New York: Wiley, 1956.

Chu, G.C., and Schramm, W. Learning from television: What the research says. Stanford, California: Stanford University Institute for Communication Research, 1967.

Collins, W.A. Learning of media content: A developmental study. Child Development, 1970, 41, 1133-1142.

Comstock, G. Effects of television on children: What is the evidence. Rand Paper Series, P-5412. Santa Monica, California: Rand Corporation, 1975.

Comstock, G., Chafee, S., Katzman, N., McCombs, M., and Roberts, D. Television and human behavior. New York: Columbia University Press, 1978.

Comstock, G., and Fisher, M. Television and human behavior: A guide to the pertinent scientific literature. Santa Monica, California: Rand Corporation, 1975.

Denney, D.R. Effects of brief observation of model behavior or conceptual tempo in impulsive children. Developmental Psychology, 1970, 2, 22-32.

Denney, D.R. Modeling effects upon conceptual style. Child Development, 1972, 43, 105-112. (a)

Denney, D.R. Modeling and eliciting effects. Child Development, 1972, 43, 810-823. (b)

Denney, D.R. *Modeling and interrogative strategies*. Paper presented at Annual Convention, American Psychological Association, September, 1974.

Dubin, R., and Hedley, R.A. *The medium may be related to the message: College instruction by TV*. Eugene, Oregon: University of Oregon Press, 1969.

Fowles, B.R., and Voyat, G. Piaget meets Big Bird: Is TV a passive teacher? *Urban Review*, 1974, *7*, 69-80.

Friedrich, L.K., and Stein, A.H. Aggressive and prosocial television programs and the natural behavior of preschool children. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, Vol. 38, No. 4, August, 1973.

Galey, M., and George, K.D. Development of skills of classification using television. *AV Communication Review*, 1974, *22*, 153-166.

Gropper, G.L., and Lumsdaine, A.A. *The use of student response to improve televised instruction*, 7 vols. Pittsburg, Pennsylvania: American Institute for Research, 1961-1964.

Jamieson, D., Suppes, P., and Wells, S. The effectiveness of alternative instructional media: A survey. *Review of Educational Research*, 1974, *44*, 1-68.

Krugman, H.E., and Hartley, E.L. Passive learning from television. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1970, *34*, 184-190.

Kuhn, D. Imitation theory and research from a cognitive perspective. *Human Development*, 1973, *16*, 157-180.

Leifer, A.D. Teaching with television and film. In N.L. Gage (ED.), *The psychology of teaching methods*. National Society for the Study of Education Yearbook, Vol. 75, Pt. 1. Chicago: National Society for the Study of Education, 1976.

Lesser, G. *Children and television: Lessons from Sesame Street*. New York: Random House, 1974.

Mander, J. *Four arguments for the elimination of television*. New York: William Morrow, 1978.

Metallinos, N. Composition of the TV picture: Some hypotheses to test the forces operating within the television screen. *Educational Communications and Technology Journal*, 1979, *27*, 205-216.

O'Brien, S.J. The effects of television instruction on problem-solving attitudes of fifth and sixth grade students. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Oregon State University, 1973.

Olson, D.R., and Brumer, J. Learning through experience and learning through media. In D.R. Olson (Ed.), *Media and symbols: The forms of expression, communication, and education*. National Society for the Study of Education Yearbook, Vol. 73. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974.

Reid, J.C., and MacLennan, P.W. Research in instructional television. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, 1967.

Salomon, G. Internalization of filmic schematic operations in interaction with learner's aptitudes. Journal of Educational Psychology, 1974, 66, 499-511.

Salomon, G. Cognitive approach to media. Educational Technology, 1976, 5, 25-28.

Salomon, G. The languages of media and the cultivation of mental skills. Invited address presented to the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Toronto, March, 1978.

Salomon, G., and Cohen, A.A. The effects of TV formats on mental skills. Paper presented at the Conference on Visual Literacy, Nashville, Tennessee, March, 1976.

Salomon, G., and Cohen, A.A. Television formats, mastery of mental skills and the acquisition of knowledge. Journal of Educational Psychology, 1977, 69, 612-619.

Spangenberg, R.W. Procedure learning and display motion. Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the Association for Educational Communications and Technology, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, March 22-26, 1971. (ED 047 537)

Stickell, D.W. A critical review of the methodology and results of research comparing televised and face-to-face instruction. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1963.

Tower, R.B., Singer, D.G., Singer, J.C., and Biggs, A. Differential effects of television programming on preschoolers' cognitive, imagination, and social play. Unpublished manuscript, 1977. (ED 153 713)

Ward, S., and Wackman, D.B. Children's information processing of television advertising. In P. Clarke (Ed.), New Models for Mass Communication Research, Vol. 2, Sage Animal Reviews of Communication Research. Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1973.

STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF TELEVISION: GETTING TO THE CHILD'S FRAME OF REFERENCE

by

Timothy P. Meyer
The University of Texas at Austin

and

Anne Hexamer
Ohio State University

Much is known about the content of television programs and commercials directed at children (Barcus, 1977; Doolittle & Pepper, 1974). However, there is little fundamental research describing children's understanding of these televised messages or of the operations and functions of television on a social, business, or societal level. Understanding is difficult to assess. Understanding comes from inferring and making interpretations, from the power to think and learn, from knowing the nature, character, or meaning of something. Understanding does not, then, derive from passive receivership or automatic processing of televised information. Understanding is an active individual process of constructing meaning. Early studies have illustrated that some attributes which people noted about an observed object were as much a function of the perceiver as the perceived (Fornbusch, Hastorf, Richardson, Muzzy, & Vreeland, 1965). Each person transforms a communicated message into personal meaning in his own frame of reference. Yet policymakers, teachers, and researchers seek generalizations about the level or nature of understanding--about the frame of reference of children.

In the last decade, researchers have made a promising shift away from simple "effects" studies of television content on children toward more theoretically based investigations of mediation, e.g., information processing, observational learning, and cognitive development. Recent studies in this tradition have established a firm beginning in the investigation of a relationship between exposure and cognition and, to some extent, behavior (Wartella, 1979; Meyer, Donohue, & Henke, 1978; Levin & Anderson, 1976; Bever, Smith, Bengen, & Johnson, 1975; Wartella & Ettema, 1974; Robertson & Rossiter, 1974; and Blatt, Spencer, & Ward, 1972).

The child has a different frame of reference from an adult. This difference may be greater than the normal difference between two people of the same age. There are two major theoretical notions about the source of distinctions between a child and an adult. One theoretical approach to investigating and describing the child's frame of reference seeks qualitative developmental differences in the thought processes of children of various ages or stages as compared to adults (Flavell, 1977; Kohlberg, 1969; Bruner, Oliver, Greenfield, et.al., 1966). The other major theoretical explanation for adult-child differences emphasizes the quantity and nature of experiential differences afforded (Mayer, 1975; Wittrock, 1974; Bandura, 1969; Gewirtz, 1969). These theoretical orientations are briefly addressed to discuss the implications for research methods, findings, and practical applications derived from each orientation.

The original research, on which the discussion is based and from which examples are drawn, was conducted in October, 1979 by the authors. This included 150 semi-structured interviews of children ranging in age from 4 to 14 years. The children were predominately white and from middle socio-economic status families. These short but lively interviews were conducted in groups of two to three children in a television game show setting. Students were self-selected, choosing to play a guessing game about segments of videotaped content and to be interviewed about their opinions and ideas. The 30-second television segments were random selections of both program and commercial content. The game playing/interviewing was videotaped for later transcription and analysis--an ongoing process at the time of this writing.

A major result of this study emphasizes the distinction between students' understanding of television and their abilities to articulate or present a representative response for assessing that understanding. This is not a new problem for researchers, nor certainly for teachers. Student responses are frequently affected by vocabulary demands, the structure of questions and tests, requests for aided or unaided recall or multiple choice/guess answers, provision of stimuli or hints, etc. These response variations may reflect differences in motivation, cognitive style, access and/or retrieval orientation to stored information, or another individual difference in mediation--none of which necessarily relates to the specific conceptualization of utility of understanding under investigation.

Attempts to describe children's understanding of the content of television programs and commercials, as one might expect, have met with limited success (National Science Foundation, 1977; Ward, Wackman, & Wartella, 1977). This lack of success stems in part from methodologies which on one hand are too focused on a particular aspect to give a picture of the child's understanding or on the other hand presume abilities of recall, self-reflection, and expression by children which are not commensurate with the level or nature of the children's understanding being investigated. The children must be allowed the opportunity to demonstrate that they are capable of making a wider range of responses. These responses must then be evaluated within the context in which they are made and the child's frame of reference. Only then may researchers gain the insights they seek and teachers or parents realize the next piece of the puzzle for improving a child's reasoning and understanding about television. Without this additional input from the children, research methods simply affirm rather than test the theoretical stances. The state of ignorance or partial knowledge on a topic remains unenlightened.

An example from our study concerns assessing a child's understanding of commercials. The selling intent is the most crucial distinction between a program and a commercial--the one sought by researchers evaluating children's "understanding." However, Mark (age 4) makes a distinction in enjoying the entertainment value in a commercial for a product which he disliked. The "Big Red" chewing gum commercial showed someone running to catch his train. Mark laughed, "I like this," meaning the little story rather than the product.

The most salient feature of distinction may not be the selling intent. Only eight of 150 children failed to identify a commercial or program segment correctly. In these instances, the 30-second segments shown did not present the selling intent or product and were very much like a program. All other segments were easily, quickly, and correctly identified. However, discussions about how they recognized a segment as a program or commercial illustrated a significant discrepancy between understanding and ability to articulate, between salience or relevance for making the distinction and a definition of the distinction. For example, this conversation between Tim and Matthew who are both 10 years old and fifth graders.

TIM: That's ah (pointing to the television monitor)...INCREDIBLE HULK
MATTHEW: (raising his hand, as if to be called upon) THE INCREDIBLE HULK
INTERVIEWER: Okay, now, why is it? What made you think that?
TIM: Because that's David Banner.
MATTHEW: David Banner
INTERVIEWER: David Banner. Okay, is it a program or commercial?
TIM AND MATTHEW: Program
INTERVIEWER: What's a program?
TIM: It is a show...
MATTHEW: Show that's on every week.
TIM: (continues) that comes on every other, every other week, the same day and time.
INTERVIEWER: Okay, what's the difference between a program and a commercial?
TIM: A commercial comes on...it can come on, uh, every week, every second, every, uh, other minute, but it...
MATTHEW: A commercial shows, ah, different products.
TIM: Advertisements
MATTHEW: Advertisements

When Tim and Matthew came up with the vocabulary word "advertisement," the interview ceased. But a magic word doesn't mean understanding, and understanding can precede the appropriate vocabulary.

INTERVIEWER: Everybody ready?
RICKY: (8 years old, first to respond to the videotaped segment) Commercial!
INTERVIEWER: How do you know it's a commercial?
RICKY: Because a program isn't like this.
INTERVIEWER: How is a program isn't like this.
RICKY: Commercials are short, and programs are long.
INTERVIEWER: Everything we're going to show today is going to be short. We're just going to show you pieces of programs.
RICKY: Oh.
INTERVIEWER: (to Gus, age 11) What were you going to say about how it's a commercial?
GUS: Because they weren't acting serious...Well, they were actin (sic) serious, but they were eatin (sic) dinner, and they said something about some macaroni; and you could tell it was a product, and then they showed a can of it. And then they go, "Progresso, make sure."
INTERVIEWER: What?
GUS: "Progresso" was the name of the product.
RICKY: I know because programs start with...they start like with, uh, the name of the show.
INTERVIEWER: And this one didn't start with the name of a show, so it's a commercial.
RICKY: So it's a commercial.

INTERVIEWER: On some of these segments, the programs don't start with the names of the shows. So that makes it difficult.
RICKY: I know.
INTERVIEWER: (to Clif, age 11) Why did you know it was a commercial?
CLIF: Umm...You started showin (sic) these cans...and certain brand...and then this guy in a regular class home eatin (sic); and then this guy in a tuxedo comes in and all that.
INTERVIEWER: And it seemed pretty strange?
CLIF: That's why I thought it was a commercial.
INTERVIEWER: You think you might see people eating, and then a man in a tuxedo, in a program?
CLIF: (shakes head) No, I don't think that these people'd just be eatin (sic) like this, and then a guy in a tuxedo comes in and says "Buy this--this is good!" You know?
INTERVIEWER: Oh, he says, "Buy this"?
CLIF: No, he says, "You're eating...so and so...so and so."
INTERVIEWER: What is the commercial trying to get you to do?
CLIF: Buy a certain brand.

The students seemed aware of the product selling intent of commercials, even though the commercials seem to be recognized by other attributes. The interviewer pressed another question, pursuing the intent of commercials. An incongruous, but not illogical, response was offered by several other children about Ricky's age of 8 years.

INTERIVEWER: Why do you think commercials are on television?
RICKY: Because, um, you know, it'll, it'll, it'll...you know, on a TV show sometimes it'll, may...I'm not sure. It'll give them a part to make sure that they're gonna, you know, where it stops on some shows, it'll give 'em a chance to make it a different way if they have to.
INTERVIEWER: It'll give who a chance to make what a different way?
RICKY: The film.
INTERVIEWER: Make the film a different way?
RICKY: So...
INTERVIEWER: You think they're deciding that right before you watch it?
RICKY: Yeah!

Ricky's impression that a television show is like a theater play with intermissions is not illogical within his frame of reference. He may not have had the experience of seeing an event tape-recorded and then re-presented. He may not understand the technicalities of a production which offer cues to distinguishing the differences between a live or a pre-taped program as it is broadcast, even if he does realize some programs are taped "re-runs." A misconception is not a priori evidence of deficient cognitive skills, retarded mental development, or even insufficient general experience. Ricky's "misconception" merely illustrates the distinction between an "adult" and one child's frame of reference.

An adult frame of reference to the child requires an initial step of understanding and sharing the specific child's frame of reference. Since the television experience cannot be made adaptive to all individuals in the mass audience, it is more incumbent upon the individuals in that audience, the researchers, teachers, and parents, to become more child centered in assessing a child's understanding of television. A child-centered approach is critical for an accurate realization of the child's comprehension, for improving communication of concepts and messages, and educational purposes.

Taking staunch positions in the development versus learning theoretical debate may detract from the effectiveness of either orientation to illustrate the child's frame of reference regarding understanding of television and potential influences on that understanding. Fascination with theoretical nuances is not denigrated, but both theoretical approaches mentioned here suggest compatible efforts on the part of teachers and parents (Meyer, 1979; Wartella, 1979; O'Neil, 1978; Wittrock, 1977). Characteristics of the individual child determine the effectiveness of teaching or attributes of a nurturant environment for developing reasoning and critical thinking.

Characterizations of children's thinking must be built from instances of their thoughts as described according to their own frames of reference. Identifying and examining the precursory attitudes and levels of understanding in early childhood seem to be the logical prerequisites for building theory as well as developing the most effective instructional programs regarding media literacy or receivership skills. It should be remembered that current theories were built from close observations of individual children. These theories may require modification based on additional and insightful observations; a war of abstractions should not tyrannize our perspectives, but release creative individual-centered efforts at comprehending and promoting students' understanding of television.

REFERENCES

Bandura, A. Social-learning theory of identificatory processes. In D.A. Goslin (Ed.), Handbook of socialization theory and research. Chicago: Rand McNally College Publishing Company, 1969.

Barcus, R.E. Children's television: An Analysis of programming and advertising. New York: Praeger, 1977.

Bever, T.G., Smith, M.L. Benger, G., & Johnson, T.G. Young viewers' troubling response to TV ads. Harvard Business Review, 1975, 53 (6), 109-120.

Blatt, J., Spencer, L., & Ward, S. A cognitive developmental study of children's reactions to television advertising. In E.A. Rubenstein, G.A. Comstock, and J.P. Murray (Eds.), Television and social behavior (Vol. IV). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972.

Bruner, J.S., Oliver, R.R., Greenfield, P.M., Hornsby, J.R., Kenney, H.J., Maccoby, M., Modiano, N., Mosher, F.A., Olson, D.R., Potter, M.C., Reich, L.C., & Sonstroem, A.M. Studies in cognitive growth: A collaboration at the center for cognitive studies. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1966.

Doolittle, J. & Pepper, R. Children's TV ad content. Journal of Broadcasting, 1975, 19, 131-142.

Dornbush, S., Hastorf, A., Richardson, S., Muzzy, R., & Vreeland, R. The perceiver and the prceived: Their relative influence on the categories of interpersonal perception. Journal of Personality and Social

Psychology, 1965, 1, 434-440.

Flavell, J.H. Cognitive development. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1977.

Gewirtz, J.L. Mechanisms of social learning: Some roles of stimulation and behavior in early human development. In D.A. Goslin (Ed.), Handbook of socialization theory and research. Chicago: Rand McNally College Publishing Company, 1969.

Kohlberg, L., Stage and sequence: The cognitive-developmental approach to socialization. In D.A. Goslin (Ed.), Handbook of socialization theory and research. Chicago: Rand McNally College Publishing Co., 1969.

Levin, S.R., & Anderson, D.R. The developmental of attention. Journal of Communication, 1976, 26, (2), 120-135.

Mayer, R.E. Information processing variables in learning to solve problems. Review of Educational Research, 1975, 45 (4), 525-541.

Meyer, T.P. Children and TV advertising: Educating the information underclass. Paper presented at the Seventh Annual Telecommunications Policy Research Conference, SkyTop, Pennsylvania, April 30, 1979.

Meyer, T.P., Donohue, T.R., & Henke, L.L. Black children's perceptions of TV advertising: A cognitive developmental study. Journal of Advertising Research, 1978, 18, 51-58.

National Science Foundation, Research on the effects of television advertising on children. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977.

O'Neil, Jr. H.F. (Ed.). Learning strategies. San Francisco: Academic Press, 1978.

Robertson, T.S., & Rossiter, J.R. Children and commercial persuasion: An attribution theory analysis. Journal of Consumer Research, 1974, 1, 13-20.

Ward, S., Wackman, D. & Wartella, E. How children learn to buy. Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1977.

Wartella, E. (Ed.). Children communicating: Media and development of thought, speech, understanding. Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, Inc., 1979.

Wartella, E., & Ettema, J.S. A cognitive developmental study of children's attention to television commercials. Communication Research, 1974, 1, 46-69.

Wittrock, M.C. Learning as a generative process. Educational Psychology, 1974, 11, 87-95.

Wittrock, M.C., & Lumsdaine, A.A. Instructional psychology. Annual Review of Psychology, 1977, 28, 417, 459.

RESEARCH HATFIELDS AND INDUSTRY McCOYS:
STEPPING THROUGH A DIALOGUE

by

Eric Michaels
Southwest Educational Development Laboratory

Introduction

Relationships between academic media researchers and broadcast industry spokesmen have taken on the properties of ritualized, formal, inter-tribal hostilities. We have become all too familiar with the objections of the industry to scientific investigations of the effects of television: a lack of certitude about results, an inappropriateness of definitions and parameters (for example, of violence), and the impossibility of translating research into policy in the commercial broadcast world. We have become equally familiar with the objections of researchers to the broadcast industry: emphasis on gratuitous anti-social portrayals, unreal representation of the world and of social relationships, commercial coercion of the young, and the promotion of a passive uncritical audience which impairs developmental skills. These positions are not moving toward resolution. Instead, positions are increasingly polarized. A beneficial dialogue between the research community and the broadcast industry has not materialized. This discussion will address these issues as a problem in social communication in an attempt to discover if part of the problem has to do with the very language used by the two communities. It is interesting that this difficulty, at the level of discourse, has not been addressed by those affected, who are themselves specialists in communications.

It has been over five years since George Comstock addressed the gap between research findings and industry policy in the 1975 Rand Report (some of his observations were anticipated in the 1972 Surgeon General's Report). Significant differences between the two communities were recognized in (1) goals, (2) economics, (3) models/methods, and (4) products/outcomes. These differences are indeed accurate and significant. But they are not unique to television research and practice. Analagous differences exist between educational researchers and yet, the flow of concepts between educators and educational researchers has been more successful. This implies that identifying disparities between thinking and doing is not a sufficient explanation for the problem. Dr. Comstock's observations are useful because they identify different organizational structures for the two groups which will help us understand specific reasons why they speak different languages. But disparities between research and practice will always exist, as Kenneth Boulding observed in his recent presidential address to the American Academy for the Advancement of Science:

> Science occupies a specialized habitat--universities, laboratories, institutes, which exist in the middle of an ecosystem that does not conform to its values. There is a constant potential tension between the scientific community, with its peculiar ethic and the social environment in which it finds itself and which supports it (1, p. 832).

In particular, "(Science) put a high value on curiosity which folk cultures and official political cultures do not. Questioning the legitimacy of an established religion or rules has been dangerous in almost any society." (1, p. 832). George Gerbner has characterized broadcast television variously as religious in its social function, an arm of the established order, and the contemporary equivalent of the folk tale. It might be argued therefore, that the scientific investigation into television's effects and the commercial production of broadcast programming are fundamentally at cross purposes; that the implied threat of one to the other is an unbreachable stumbling block to discourse. But this conference is only one of the increasing examples of evidence to the contrary. There is much that we would like to know from each other, if we could find an adequate means of expression and respect. In what follows, the peculiarities of scientific discourse will be outlined, followed by a more tentative model of the broadcast industry's language. This attention to the model of expression seems a likely first step toward replacing the present antagonism with a more interdependent relationship based on an adequate communication system, a kind of Esperanto for our present purposes.

Scientific Discourse

Scientific procedure is not, properly speaking, a single method or theory. It is more like a form of discourse--an artificial, highly formal language that will allow research to proceed in an orderly and cumulative manner. Curiously, contrary to the popular notion, science is not based on facts in the sense of absolute truths. Instead, scientific knowledge proceeds by disproof. "Knowledge increases not by the matching of images with the real world (which Hume pointed out is impossible), that is, not by the direct perception of the truth, but by a relentless bias toward the perception of error" (1, p. 831). A scientific investigator forms an image of the real world which, because it is an image, is ultimately inaccurate. He tests this image by whatever orderly procedures are agreed to be appropriate in a given case and by this discovers ideally the points at which his image is inaccurate. He, or another researcher, then tests this revised image and further refines it. In this manner, the image is made to approximate the real world more and more closely. At a certain point the limits of approximation will be reached and the image will be replaced, as the Einsteinian image replaced the Newtonian image when the Newtonian image was exhausted. It cannot be said that either Einstein's or Newton's image is more "true," only that there are limits to their ability to approximate certain real phenomena.

There are two features of this scientific procedure which merit our attention because they characterize scientific discourse. First, no scientific finding can be considered absolutely true. This is the disprovability requirement of the scientific method. Any image which cannot be disproved is not, formally speaking, scientific. The second feature is that the procedures used in an experiment are carefully revealed in the presentation of the experiment so that, ideally, other researchers may either duplicate the equipment, or build on it to refine the image further, or disprove it. Skepticism and criticism therefore, are the hallmarks of the scientific attitude. And openness and publicness are requirements of the procedure. What emerges is a highly artificial language of science in which all facts are tentative and which requires the development of a rather abstract terminology, like mathematics. Casual language means different things to different people in different settings. But scientific langugage must mean the same thing to all scientists so that the above procedures can be followed.

Because scientific language must be phrased in such a way that findings can be disproved, there will always be some ambiguity in policy implications of scientific findings. Any industry whose existing policy is perceived as threatened by scientific investigation is likely to focus on the disprovable aspects of a scientific image in order to defuse any policy implications that may run counter to its interests. But the rules for that criticism must be consistent with the rules of the scientific dicourse for it to enter into the refinement of the image. When the broadcast industry criticizes media research, the criticism often appears to be based on a misinterpretation of these rules, examples of which are described below. When the criticism appears to serve industry goals directly, rather than the scientific goal of increased knowledge, the criticism is not merely difficult to incorporate into the research process, it is held suspect. But there is much that the industry objects to which is indeed worth serious consideration by scientists. For example, does the definition of violence used in the Cultural Indicator's Violence Profile include too wide a range of incidents than are justifiable for the analysis of effects? The inclusiveness of the Gerbner/Gross definition (3) may be partly based on an epistemological requirement that parameters for coding events be clear cut. "Fuzzy" categories must be avoided so that the research can be duplicated by diverse scientists. A more limited definition might run the risk of injecting personal evaluations into this coding. This would violate the requirements of scientific language and procedure. But the industry criticism fails to take these requirements of science into account or offer alternative definitions that would satisfy scientific protocol. It presumes instead an antagonistic bias and implicates the researchers' motives. Thus, their objections cannot be incorporated into the refinements of the image of television's effects that the Cultural Indicators Project is developing.

Science and Technology

The broadcast industry has not been altogether deaf to the sciences. In fact, the development of television was a direct outgrowth of scientific investigation in the fields of physics and chemistry. The industry has learned admirably how to understand the applications of that language. The problem has emerged only in the area of what are termed the "soft sciences." A short history of these two branches of science and the relationship between them is worth a brief digression.

What have been called the "hard sciences"--physics, chemistry, geology and so forth--have had a direct impact on technology for only the past hundred years. That is to say, industry's ability to understand the language of scientific findings is considerably more recent than most people realize. But the byproducts of this relatively recent dialogue have been precisely those inventions which have transformed our century most remarkably: energy sources, communication, and medicine. These transformations which were accomplished by the application of scientific investigation to the physical world were not matched by the applications of scientific investigation into the social/human world. The record of prediction and evaluation of the impact of technology, which is an emerging focus of the "soft" social sciences is not impressive. The reasons for this are complex, but social research as a scientific procedure is fairly recent and we are still disputing the applicablity of certain kinds of methods borrowed from the hard sciences to human phenomena. While the rules of discourse remain as described in the preceeding section, the kinds of measures and evidence which are productive are still in dispute. As a result, our findings may be especially vulnerable to disprovability. But this is a healthy sign in the early stages of the formulation of a scientific image. To treat it as a failure would be an error, particularly in light of the necessary relationship between the two areas of science.

The implications of an expanding technology without an assessment of technology's impact on goals for the human future are frightening. In the last decade, the population has indeed become frightened about a number of possible impacts. Concern with environmental pollutants, with recombinant DNA research and with the political and social implications of our energy technology clearly indicates that many people believe we have failed to base technology on an adequate understanding of its social impact. It should surprise no one that television is being added to the growing list of inventions which the public feels may not be adequately understood in human terms, and which may have unforeseen effects on their lives. If the social science research community fails to develop a workable image of the effects of television on viewers, a concerned public is likely to base its opposition on less rational grounds. Every social ill, every perceived difference in this generation's behavior from their parents' may be blamed on TV if no guidelines exist to make more precise statements about television's effects.

Broadcast Industry Discourse

The broadcast industry conducts its own research. On the basis of this, it attempts to sell its products, define effects and defend its interests. But these findings rarely pacify the public, and more rarely satisfy the scientific community. To a very real extent, there will always be suspicion of an industry's evaluation of itself, especially when that evaluation seems, on the whole, self-serving. But what precise elements of the broadcast industry's presentation of its research are inconsistent with scientific discourse, and as such, do not meet scientific expectations and criteria? The two essential elements which were identified earlier in this discussion as hallmarks of scientific procedure are conspicuous by their absence from the industry's reports.

First, there is a lack of appreciation of the tentativeness of scientific results. This may be appreciated by resuscitating a distinction popular several years ago between process and product. Scientific procedure is an ongoing process; whereas; industrial organizations as commercial enterprises are product oriented. Products are unassailable and unambiguous. They work or they don't; they sell or they don't. But scientific "products"--the results of particular studies--are valued ultimately as they conform to and inform the ongoing scientific tradition. Since no scientific findings are absolutely true, since they are disprovable, the industry takes a fairly naive position when it presents its findings as facts, or when it attacks or rediscovers the disprovability of scientific research. Rarely do we see examples of network criticism of scientific research which consider the process's context, the research on which the criticized investigation is based or the heuristic value it provides for subsequent investigation. Yet this more than particular results, is the measure of value that scientists apply to their colleagues' work.

This process/product distinction applies to the second requirement of scientific discourse as well, the necessity to reveal all procedures used in producing results. Industry funded research tends to be conducted secretly, as befits a competitive business. While Einstein tells Oppenheimer, Macy's of course, does not tell Gimbles. There are very promising recent exceptions, such as the Singers' work funded by ABC, and scientists will naturally give particular scrutiny to the results of such collaborations. But the single most pervasive and influential research funded jointly by the networks, the Nielsen ratings, remain obscure in procedure and validity. In a sense, the Nielsens represent a psuedo-scientific procedure, in that there is a formal artificial language constructed to which all subscribers agree. It is this consensual aspect, the fact that broadcasters and advertisers alike agree to its effectiveness and applicablity which ultimately gives the Nielsens such power. The Nielsens may be said to provide the industry analogy to the scientific research conducted by academic scientists so that the comparison of the two is especially pertinent to a discovery of the differences between languages. The Nielsens can be characterized as product-oriented research. We are not privy to the assumptions or procedures built into the research design. Nielsen surveys therefore violate the second requirement for scientific discourse. The implications of this violation are not merely ethical. Any errors built into the research design, data collection or analysis are not subject to critical peer review. The image of television effects assumed by the Nielsen hypotheses therefore is not refined to approximate reality more and more closely by scientific discourse. Any errors built into the procedure will have a cumulative effect, therefore, and cause the image to deviate further and further from the real phenomena it presumes to measure, unless the image of the viewing world is in fact true. Since it is a tenet of science that the image cannot be absolutely true, that the roadmap is always different from the road itself, we can predict increasing inaccuracy in such an image reapplied over time. Here is a case where scientific review conceivably could impact industry research.

The public grumblings over the effects of the Nielsens on programming policies are being matched by findings in the scientific sector. Research conducted at the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, as well as other findings, indicates that television's on-off switch is a very poor indicator of viewer attention. Advertisers may well demand a more sensitive measure of attention in order to sell their products if they discover that an unattended set doesn't get their message across whether it's on or not. But we know very little about the Nielsen ratings, the nature of the sample or the correlational statistics applied, and so we cannot enter into a dialogue with the Nielsen researchers. To reiterate, the power of product oriented research rests mainly on agreement about the value of results. Should any doubt arise in the communities which share in the agreement, the pseudo-science collapses. It is not an ongoing tradition, publicly refining its image of reality through critical scientific process.

Product orientation is particularly noticeable when the industry attempts, with all good intentions, to answer charges the research community raises in the awkward dialogue which currently exists. When asked about anti-social programming, racial or sexual stereotyping, and so forth, the industry is apt to offer lists of products: the number of shows it currently airs of a particular sort. The decision that such-and-such a show is intended, by programmers and policy makers, to be pro-social is assumed to be sufficient evidence of commitment to these values. Whether the effects on viewers match the intent is not addressed. The most revealing recent example is the inclusion of bridges between children's programming and commercials which were intended to help young viewers distinguish between program and advertisement. It was left to the scientific community to discover that these bridges often had the opposite effect; they obscured, rather than revealed the distinction in a sample of young viewers (5).

The distinctions between product and process produce distinctions in language as well. It already has been mentioned that Dr. Gerbner chooses a definition of violence based on requirements for precision in the scientific process. Yet this definition does not meet the popular definition of violence, as the networks points out. The networks, by contrast rely on popular definitions of terms which may be very difficult to operationalize in scientific discourse. Perhaps the best example of this is the use of the word "entertainment." Much television is said to be entertaining. And many people, when asked, will reveal that this is the reason they watch. But what kind of category is entertainment? What kinds of behaviors are involved in viewing? What effects does entertainment include or exlude? Surveys often require respondents to choose whether they are being entertained or informed, for example. But are these discrete categories? Whole bodies of literature in the social sciences, folklore and the humanities all reveal that many distinct functions may be performed under the guise of entertainment. The industry's tacit collusion with the public that entertainment is a priori harmless, informationless and without didactic effect, is not confirmed by more careful investigation. We only need to recall that Leni Reifenstal's propoganda films for The Third Reich were, and still are, supremely entertaining. A more precise term is required if we are to discover how television functions for viewers.

Implications and Suggested Directions

The basis of language is agreement. Words don't mean anything by themselves, but take on meanings by agreement among the people who use them. In order for the researchers and the practitioners in broadcast media to communicate, therefore, there must be agreement: first, that we need to communicate, and second, that the language developed for this communication be based on shared rules and meanings.

I have mentioned in passing some of the value and necessity of creating this kind of dialogue between the television industry and the research community: growing public concern over effects, potential inaccuracies in industry-based research, and the fundamental danger of unassessed applications of technology. We should also note that the airways themselves are a public trust and their users are required to serve the public interest. While this has had only limited meaning in the past, it is a lever which could be wielded by government and the public, should industry objectives and scientific findings become too opposed.

Assuming that all parties agree to the benefits of a productive dialogue, how can this be accomplished? I believe a good first step is the one attempted by this paper. The parties must first come to understand the nature of the language--unique to each group. The rules of scientific discourse have been described as stemming from particular requirements of the scientific method, and are best characterized as an emphasis on ongoing process. The rules of industry discourse stem from business and economic realities which are product oriented. These differences are outgrowths of differing organizational features as Comstock has noted, and do adequately serve the interests for which they are designed. An axiom of comparative linguistics should be recalled: languages are adequate to the needs of the communities which speak them, and no language is better or worse than another in absolute terms. But neither language in this case is adequate to serve the purpose of communication between communities.

An analogy to a current linguistic issue is useful here. For a very long time, black English was considered a degenerate or inferior form of standard English. Black children were taught to speak "properly" by denigrating what seemed to be mistakes in their speech. The improvement this was supposed to produce in blacks' use of standard English often did not occur. A more current working hypothesis, based on a thorough-going analysis of the rules of black English (4) is that this is a distinct language. Therefore, the teaching of standard English can be accomplished better by treating it in this manner. Not only does this seem to produce better results for the speakers themselves, it helps to clear up misunderstandings. Since the two languages use very similar terms, the differences in meaning of the same term in differing linguistic contexts created a serious misinterpetation in black/white dialogue. In a very general way, I am proposing a similar model for the differences between research and industry language. We need to appreciate that terms such as *violence* and *entertainment* mean different things in these different contexts. Instead of using these differences as a basis for confusion leading to disrespect, we can use them to develop a working relationship which appreciates differences in our social and professional environments. This appears to offer the best opportunity for the long overdue dialogue between our respective communities so that the public ultimately can be served by an informed humanistic use of the airways.

REFERENCES

1. Boulding, Kenneth E., 1980, "Science: Our Common Heritage." *Science*, Vol. 207, No. 4433, 22 Feb. 1980, pp. 831-836.

2. Comstock, George, and Lindsey, George, 1975, *Television and Human Behavior: The Research Horizon, Future and Present*. Santa Monica, Rand.

3. Gerbner, George and Gross, Larry, Signorellie, Nancy, Morgan, Michael, Jackson-Beck, Maralyn. 1979, "The Demonstration of Power: Violence Profile No. 10. *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 29, No. 3, pp. 177-196.

4. Labove, William, 1972, *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black Engish Venacular*. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press.

5. Palmer, Edward, and McDowell, Cynthia, 1979, "Program/Commercial Separations in Children's Television Programming." *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 29, No. 3, pp. 197-201.

A BEFORE-AND-AFTER STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF TELEVISION

by

Tannis McBeth Williams, Ph.D.
Department of Psychology
University of British Columbia

A longitudinal study based on a natural before-and-after experiment involving television was conducted in three Canadian communities. This research was done by several faculty members and graduate students in the Department of Psychology at the University of British Columbia under my direction.

The impetus for the research came from Mary Morrison, who alerted me in the summer of 1973 to a Canadian town that did not yet have television reception but was due to get it within a year. We studied that town, given the pseudonym Notel, and two other towns chosen for comparison, Unitel and Multitel, in 1973 before Notel got television and again two years later. During the first phase of our research, Notel had no television reception; Unitel received CBC, the Canadian government-owned channel; and Multitel received CBC and the three major U.S. networks, ABC, CBS, and NBC. When Notel got television in November, 1973, they began to receive one channel, CBC. At the same time, reception in Unitel improved by the addition of a second CBC channel with better reception. Multitel reception did not change.

The extent to which the three towns were comparable in ways other than television reception is important. Data from the 1971 Canadian census revealed only slight differences; on the whole the towns were remarkably similar. To our knowledge, there were no major social changes in terms of bus, rail, plane service, etc., in the two-year period between the phases of data collection. The road linking Notel and Unitel improved significantly at about the same time as television arrived, but this did not affect Notel's access to the nearest larger community (reached by a different road). In general, we feel confident that lack of television reception was the overwhelming difference between Notel and the other towns.

In the first phase of the project, the median number of hours of viewing per week was 0 for Notel, compared with 21 hours for Unitel and 23 for Multitel. In the second phase, about 90% of the people in Notel had television sets. The median number of hours of TV viewing per week was now 25 in all three towns, which is consistent with other North American data) e.g., Comstock, Chaffee, Katzman, McCombs, & Roberts, 1978).

Children's Aggressive Behavior. Research on the impact of television on children's aggressive behavior was conducted by Lesley A. Joy, Meredith M. Kimball, and Merle L. Zabrack.

In both phases, five male and five female children at each grade level in each of the three towns were observed in free play on the school playground. Before Notel got television Grades 1, 2, 4, and 5 were observed, and two years later, Grades 1, 2, 3, and 4. Thus, children in Grades 1 and 2 were studied longitudinally and observed again in the second phase, when in Grades 3 and 4;

44 of 60 (73%) were still available. Sixteen additional children in Grade 3 and 4 were added to this second phase group for the cross-sectional analyses.

Each child was watched by two trained observers during 21, one-minute intervals over a seven-to-ten-day period. No child was observed for two consecutive minutes. Reliability was greater than .8 in both phases of the study. The observers used a checklist, noting how many times each of 14 physical and 9 verbal behaviors was displayed by the child being observed during that interval.

In both phases of the study, teacher and peer ratings of aggression were obtained, were found to be intercorrelated, and were also correlated with the observational measures of aggression, lending validity to those observations.

In general, the results of both the longitudinal and cross-sectional analyses indicated that two years following the inception of television in their community, Notel children had increased in both physical and verbal aggression. Furthermore, their aggression scores were now higher than those of children in Multitel. This suggests that the relationship between television viewing and aggressive behavior is not necessarily linear. Given that there is more aggression and violence depicted on the U.S. networks than on CBC (Williams, Zabrack, & Joy, 1977), and that the level of aggression portrayed on U.S. television was increasing during the period examined (Gerbner & Gross, 1976), children in Multitel might have been expected to be the most aggressive in both phases of this study. This did not occur. However, while there is less aggressive content in programs shown on CBC than on ABC/CBS/NBC, the difference is not substantial. And although CBC carried only two crime shows per week during this research period, it carried sixteen situation comedies per week, which contain high levels of verbal aggression. CBC may well depict a sufficient amount of aggression to affects its viewers. The findings of this study of children's aggressive behavior fit with that hypothesis, and in my opinion a threshold model is more appropriate than a linear one for the effects of television.

Television may have had a non-specific energizing effect (Tannebaum Zillman, 1975) and/or disinhibiting effect on the children in Notel. Comstock, Chaffee, Katzman, McCombs, and Roberts (1978) contend that the general arousal or excitation associated with television may facilitate learning of the content portrayed more than the nature of the content itself facilitates learning. Since television was relatively novel to Notel children, arousal effects may have been greater for them, and they may have attended more closely to, and been more affected by, what they saw. With regard to the possible disinhibiting effect of television, it is important to remember that social learning theory (Bandura, 1973) involves not only the notion that specific behaviors may be learned by viewing a televised model. As Bandura (1978) has recently outlined, exposure to televised violence can also alter restraints over aggressive behavior and desensitize and habituate people to violence. The disinhibition hypothesis fits better with the finding that Notel children increased in aggression than would a theory restrict to modelling of specific behaviors. It also provides a reasonable explanation of the findings obtained by Belson (1978) in England for the relationship between television and the physically aggressive behavior of adolescent boys.

Finally, it should be noted that the findings in this study for verbal aggression were as substantial, and in some ways more clearcut, than those for physical aggression. Multitel children were initially highest in verbal aggression, and Notel and Unitel children did not differ. Two years after their town received television, Notel children were highest in verbal aggression. The finding that television may have had an impact on children's verbal aggression behavior is not surprising. Most content analyses have focused on the depiction of physical aggression, but Williams, Zabrack, and Joy (1977) found that whereas 27% of the program segments in crime shows contained aggression, most of which was physical, 40% of the segments of situation comedies contained aggression, almost all of which was verbal.

Children's Reading Skills. Raymond S. Corteen is the author of the study of the impact of television's inception on children's reading skills. Children's reading habits have been studied fairly extensively in relation to television (e.g., Himmelweit, Oppenheim, & Vince, 1958; Maccoby, 1951; Murray & Kippax, 1978; Schramm, Lyle and Parker, 1961), but there has been relatively little research involving the assessment of actual reading skills.

Before Notel had television, we assessed the reading skills of children in Grades 2, 3, and 8 in all three towns. Two years later, children in Grades 2, 3, and 8 were tested, and children in Grades 4 and 5 who had been tested two years earlier and were still available were retested. In all, there were about 480 students in this study.

Portions of the Gates-McKillop (1962) Reading Diagnostic Tests were used. Individually, each child was given three tests consisting of single words, phrases of two to four words, and nonsense words. The items were presented one at a time in a tachistocope which controlled the time the items were visible.

The results varied according to the grade and sex of the children assessed. At the Grade 2 level, there was a relationship between television experience and reading skills for boys but not for girls. Before their town had television reception, Notel boys in Grade 2 were better readers than male second graders in both Multitel and Unitel, who did not differ. Two years later there had been a significant decrease in the scores of Notel boys in Grade 2, to the extent that there were no longer any significant town differences. For second grade girls, there were no significant differences between the town both before and after Notel got television. Thus the effect at the second grade level was specific to boys. Stated in a slightly different way, the effect of television seemed to be to introduce a sex difference in the reading skills of second graders. The only instance in which Grade 2 girls did not obtain higher scores than Grade 2 boys was in Notel, before television. Two years later, and in the other towns at both times, the mean girls' score was higher than that for boys.

At the Grade 3 level, there was again evidence that television has a negative effect on children's reading skills, but the pattern was a bit different than that for Grade 2. There was a significant decrease in the total reading scores of Notel third graders from the first to the second phase of the study, and this occurred for both girls and boys. Before Notel had television, girls in Grade 3 had significantly higher scores than third grade girls in the other towns, but afterward their scores were significantly worse. Notel third grade boys were not initially different from boys in the other towns, but two years later male third graders there had significantly lower reading scores than male third graders in the other two towns. In other words, the performance of both male and female third graders had fallen below the reading performance of their age mates in Unitel and Multitel. This is perhaps not surprising, since they had been Grade 1 when television arrived. To the extent that television has an impact on children's reading skills, one might expect the impact to be the greatest for children just learning to read.

The longitudinal data, comparing second and third graders before Notel got television with themselves two years later when they were in Grades 4 and 5, indicated that once the superior skills had been acquired, there was no evidence that availability of television diminished them. To the extent that the declines observed cross-sectionally can be attributed to television, it appears that its impact is largely on the acquisition of reading skills.

The major results could be interpeted as indicating a deleterious effect of television on reading in the early grades, but several alternative explanations are also possible. The most obvious of these would be that different methods of teaching reading were used in the three schools. This was investigated and did not seem to be the case. It was not possible to evaluate such subtle effects as differing personalities among the Grade 1, 2, and 3 teachers. Such differences would, however, be expected to be randomly distributed across the communities, and if the primary cause of reading skill differences, would be unlikely to produce a sensible pattern of results in relation to the television continuum.

Cognitive Development. A study of the relationship between television viewing experience and some cognitive abilities were conducted by Linda F. Harrison and Tannis MacBeth Williams.

There has been considerable speculation about potentially positive and negative relationships between children's television viewing habits and their cognitive development. We assessed the impact of television on three well-established primary abilities, verbal ability, spatial ability, and creativity. It was hypothesized that television would have a negative effect on creativity and a positive effect on verbal ability. Although it is not good scientific practice to put forth a null hypothesis, we chose to measure spatial ability because we could think of no rationale whereby it would be affected by exposure to television and we were interested in demonstrating a differential pattern of the relationships between television and cognitive ability.

The measure of verbal ability used was the vocabulary subtest of the Weschsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC), and the measure of spatial ability was the WISC block design subtest. The analyses were based on scaled scores, which correct for age differences. The creativity tasks were chosen from Wallach and Kogan's (1965) work. In the unusual uses task, a verbal measure of creativity, the child is asked to name as many uses as possible for a common item, e.g., a newspaper. Figural creativity was measured by showing a line drawing and asking the child to name all the things the drawing could be.

These cognitive tasks were given in both phases of the project to all children in Grades 4 and 7 in all three towns, a total of 160 children in the first phase and 146 in the second phase. In addition, they were given in the second phase to those children in Grades 6 and 9 who had been tested two years earlier in Grades 4 and 7. There were 137 (86%) of these longitudinal subjects still available.

The results for the WISC vocabulary and block design subtests indicated that television had no effect on performance on these tasks. It should be noted, however, that the children in this study were in Grades 4 and 7. Schramm, Lyle and Parker (1961) found that children with television come to school (i.e., Grade 1) with better vocabulary scores than children without television, but the differences disappear by the end of elementary school. It would have been helpful in assessing the impact of television on children's vocabulary scores to have tested first graders. This was not done because of a need for the entire project to limit the number of studies conducted in any one grade.

Before they had television reception, Notel children in Grades 4 and 7 had significantly higher verbal creativity scores than those of their age-mates in the other two towns, but two years later, there were no differences in the cross-sectional analysis. Put differently, only Notel children's verbal creativity scores changed from the first to the second phase of the study, and they decreased significantly, as they had been hypothesized. The pattern of results was the same in the longitudinal analysis based on the scores of fourth and seventh graders from the first phase and sixth and ninth graders from the second phase.

For the figural creativity scores, there were no town differences in either phase of the project in the cross-sectional comparisons, but Unitel scores increased significantly from the first to the second phase. In the longitudinal analysis there were no town differences in either phase and no change for any of the towns.

To sum up the ideational fluency results, there was no evidence that television exposure is related to children's performance on figural creativity measures, but there was strong evidence that television exposure is negatively related to children's performance on verbal creativity tasks. This is especially interesting in light of the finding that children's vocabulary scores, another verbal assessment, were unrelated to television exposure.

If the ways in which television might influence its viewers are considered, two possiblities seem most salient. The content of what is viewed might have some impact, and this is what we hypothesized for the WISC vocabulary scores. The results did not support the hypothesis. On the other hand, the hypothesis may have been naive. Children without television may acquire vocabulary skills from reading, and those with television may acquire them from TV. It is possible that the non-interactive nature of current television programming and its general orientation toward convergent problem-solving (i.e., coming up with one right answer) have something to do with the apparently negative impact of television on children's verbal creativity scores. However, this explanation would not readily explain the different results obtained for the figural creativity items, i.e., the lack of relationship between television exposure and figural creativity.

A second way in which television might affect viewers is through displacement, in that viewing time is not spent in other activities. This seems to provide a better explanation of the higher scores of Notel children before their town received television. The persons testing the children had the impression that many of their responses to the unusual use items were ones they had tried, or were based on their own play experiences, and that Notel children simply had more such experiences.

Children's Sex Role Perceptions. Meredith M. Kimball is the author of the study of the relationship between television and children's sex role perceptions and attitudes.

It has been found in previous research that men outnumber women in television programming (Dominick & Rauch, 1972; McArthur & Eisen, 1976; McNeil, 1975; Sternglanz & Serbin, 1974; Williams, Zabrack & Joy, 1977), and both men and women are presented in traditional sex roles (Busby, 1975; Long & Simon, 1974; McArthur & Eisen, 1976; Sternglanz & Serbin, 1974). It has also been found that children's behavior is related to their viewing of male and female models on television (Beuf, 1974; Lyle & Hoffman, 1972; McArthur & Eisen, 1976). In this study it was hypothesized that children in Notel would have less stereotyped attitudes toward sex roles before the inception of television reception than two years later.

Sex role perceptions were measured with the Sex Role Differentiation (SRD) scale designed by Lambert (1971). The scale has two sections. The peer scales require children to rate how appropriate or frequent certain behaviors are for boys and girls their own age. On the set of parent scales children rate how frequently their mother and father perform specific tasks. For each item, the child rates (1-7) how accurately the item describes boys their own age (or on the parent scale, their father) and how accurately (1-7) it describes girls their own age (on the parent scale, their mother). The differences are summed across items, with a higher score indicating a greater tendency to segregate the sexes socially and psychologically.

The peer and parent SRD scales were completed by sixth and ninth graders in all three towns in both phases of the study (a total of 483 children).

Because the children were asked questions about their parents, responses were made anonymously, so longitudinal analyses were not possible.

On the average, boys held more traditional perceptions of their parents' sex role behavior than did girls, but otherwise, parent perceptions did not vary (by town or phase of the study).

On the peer scale, boys again tended to display more traditional sex role perceptions than girls. The attitudes of both girls and boys in Notel had become more traditional after two years of television availability. Before Notel had television, boys there held less traditional sex role attitudes than boys in Unitel and Multitel; two years later, there were no town differences. In the case of girls, Notel and Unitel girls initially held less traditional views than Multitel girls; two years later, Notel girls held more traditional views than girls in both Unitel and Multitel.

The finding that the mean Notel boys' and girls' peer scores increased significantly following the inception of television lends support to the hypothesis that children in Notel would have more traditional sex role attitudes after the introduction of television. It is interesting to note that differences between the phases of the study were found only with the peer scales. Attitudes toward peers may be more susceptible to change, whatever the cause, than perceptions of parents' behaviors.

Participation in Community Activities. A study dealing with the impact of television at the community level, in terms of the residents' participation in community activities, was also included in the project. The authors are Tannis MacBeth Williams and Gordon C. Handford.

In most previous research on the effects of television, investigators have focused on television's impact on the skills, habits, or behavior of individuals or groups. We hypothesized that television also might have some second-order effects. The presence of television in a community might effect the residents indirectly through the availability of other activities, and through patterns of participation and social interaction in these activities. We decided to use a system developed by Roger Barker and his colleagues (1954) to analyze our three towns.

Barker developed the concept of what he called a "behavior setting," essentially, a public place or activity. Behavior settings may occur once, regularly, or they may be ongoing. Examples of behavior settings would be: a curling club bonspiel, the Highway Motel, school sports day, free skating at the ice arena, rug-weaving bee at John Brown's, the R.C.M.P. station, the village park, Mary Smith's funeral.

Obviously, behavior settings are specific to communities, although categories of settings (e.g., sports, businesses) might be the same. In both phases of this research, lists of behavior settings were generated for the events of the previous year in each community by visiting the town and interviewing people, by personal inspection, and by going through community calendars and newspapers. A questionnaire was then developed for each town. The person filling out the questionnaire was asked to check off three behavior settings she or he had participated in during the previous year, and for each one checked, to write out what had been done there (e.g., watched hockey games, played shortstop for the women's softball league, store customer, president of the mixed Curling Club).

In both phases of the study, children in Grades 7-12 filled out the behavior settings questionnaires at school. Questionnaires were also mailed to a random sample of adults on the voters' lists. In the first phase, 1043 questionnaires were completed and two years later, 1269.

One of our hypotheses was that television would have the effect of reducing the number of settings available. But the numbers were very comparable; 271 and 279 for Notel, 250 and 275 for Unitel, and 247 and 280 for Multitel, in the first and second phases, respectively.

Whereas the number of settings available did not seem to vary substantially in relation to the availability of television, use of the settings did vary. Setting use was examined in terms of number of "entries," the number of times each person had participated in (entered) each setting during the previous year. Both before they had television and two years later, Notel had significantly more setting entries than Unitel and Multitel, and the latter two towns did not differ. However, the absolute difference in mean number of entries between Notel and Unitel was much greater in the first phase than in the second phase, and the same was true for the comparison between Notel and Multitel. Cross-sectional analyses revealed that the drop in setting entries was significant only for Notel. Longitudinal analyses for only those subjects who answered questionnaires in both phases (481 people) revealed the same trend, a larger drop in mean number of entries for Notel (65.3 to 50.2) than for Unitel (50.1 to 46.6) and Multitel (44.7 to 41.2).

There were some interesting findings concerning age differences in relation to the availability of television and participation in community activities. The subjects were categorized in the following age groups: 7-11, 12-15, 16-19, 20-35, 36-55, 56-65, and 66+. Before Notel had television reception, Notel residents in the two oldest age groups had more behavior setting entries than comparably aged residents of the other two towns. Two years later, the drop in participation in community activities by the two oldest age groups characteristic of Unitel and Multitel was also true of Notel. One ramification of these findings is that in a town without television, since older people are more likely to participate in community activities, they are probably more visible in the community, and younger people have more contact with them. In other words, the quantitative difference in setting entries may have a qualitative aspect as well; there may be less age segregation in a community without television. We are checking this possibility by examining our data from the point of view of settings (Who participates in a given setting or category of settings?) rather than people (How many and which settings do people enter?).

The behavior settings were grouped in each town into 11 categories: sports, open areas, businesses, civic, educational, clubs, medical, dances/parties, special (e.g., weddings), religious, entertainment. There were entry differences among the towns for sports and business settings in both phases of the study. Participation in business settings dropped in all three towns, but slightly more in Notel. The most likely explanation of the general drop is the economic recession evident in 1975-76 by comparison with 1973-74. Participation trends for sports behavior settings were quite different for the three towns. There was a fairly drastic drop for Notel. Unitel entries remained at the same level, and there was a slight increase for Multitel.

When all of these results are considered together, some patterns seem clear. The first phase results indicate that when residents do not have television reception, they participate more in community activities than do residents of comparably sized towns with television reception. The second phase results suggest that there tends to be a decrease in participation in community activities in the two years following the inception of television reception, especially for older residents. However, the decrease occurring over the two-year period was not sufficiently marked to bring Notel down to the level of the two communities with television reception for ten or more years. Finally, it is interesting, although perhaps not surprising, that the type of activity in which participation decreased most was sports.

Conclusion. In the space available here it has been possible to provide only a superficial and cursory outline of some of our findings. Although there are many pitfalls and problems associated with field research, we feel that this natural experiment has yielded results that will contribute to the growing body of knowledge concerning the impact of television, and that shed light on some of the theoretical issues regarding the mechanisms of television's impact. In quasi-experimental research, where random assignment of subjects to groups is not possible, statements regarding causality must be made cautiously, if at all. The process of carefully examining possible threats to the internal and external validity of this research (Cook & Campbell, 1976) has enabled us to feel confident about our findings. Some of the factors that lend credence to the results are that all three towns were studied both before and after the inception of television in Notel; multiple measures were used in each of the studies; more than one age level was studied in each case, so changes due to maturation and development can be separated from other changes; and several well-known findings obtained by other researchers with other samples were replicated, lending external validity and generalizability to the results.

REFERENCES

Bandura, A. *Aggression: A social learning analysis*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973.

Bandura, A. Social learning theory of aggression. *Journal of Communication*, 1978, *28*, 12-29.

Barker, R.G., & Wright, H.F. *Midwest and its children: Psychological ecology of an American town*. Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson, 1954.

Belson, W.A. *Television violence and the adolescent boy*. Westmead, England: Saxon House, 1978.

Beuf, A. Doctor, lawyer, household drudge. *Journal of Communication*, 1974, *24*, 1942-145.

Busby, L.V. Sex-role research on the mass media. *Journal of Communication*, 1975, *25*, 107-131.

Comstock, G., Chaffee, S., Katzman, N., McCombs, M., & Roberts, D. *Television and human behavior*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1978.

Cook, T.D., & Campbell, D.T. The design and conduct of quasi-experiments and true experiments in field settings. In M.D. Dunette (Eds.), *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology*. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1976.

Dominick, J.R., & Rauch, G.E. The image of women in network TV commercials. *Journal of Broadcasting*, 1972, *16*, 259-265.

Gerbner, G., & Gross, L. Living with television: The violence profile. *Journal of Communications*, 1976, *26*, 1972-199.

Himmelweit, H.T., Oppenheim, A.N., & Vince, P. *Television and the child*. London: Oxford University Press, 1958.

Lambert, R.D. *Sex role imagery in children: Social origins of the mind*. Studies of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada, No. 6, Ottawa: Information Canada, 1971.

Liebert, R.M., & Schwartzenberg, N.S. Effects of mass media. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 1977, *26*, 141-173.

Lyle, J., & Hoffman, H.R. Children's use of television and other media. In E.A. Rubinstein, G.A. Comstock, & J.P. Murray (Eds.), *Television and social behavior, Vol. 4. Television in day-to-day life: Patterns of use*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1972, pp.345-394.

Long, M.L., & Simon, R.J. The role and status of women on children and family TV programming. *Journalism Quarterly*, 1974, *51*, 107-110.

Maccoby, E.E. Television: Its impact on school children. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1951, *51*, 421-444.

McArthur, L.Z., and Eisen, S.V. Television and sex role stereotyping. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 1976, *6*, 329-351.

McNeil, V.C. Feminish, femininity, and the television series: A content analysis. *Journal of Broadcasting*, 1975, *19*, 259-271.

Murray, J.P., & Kippax, S. Children's social behavior in three towns with differing television experience. *Journal of Communication*, 1978, *28*, 19-29.

Schramm, W., Lyle, J., & Parker, E.B. *Television in the lives of our children*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1961.

Sternglanz, S.H., & Serbin, L.A. Sex role stereotyping in children's television programs. *Developmental Psychology*, 1974, *10*, 710-715.

Tannenbaum, P.H., Zillman, D. Emotional arousal in the facilitation of aggression through communication. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 8, New York: Academic Press, 1975.

Wallach, M.A., Kogan, N. *Modes of thinking in young children*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1965.

Williams, T.M., Zabrack, M.L., & Joy, L.A. A content analysis of entertainment television programming. In *Report of the Ontario Royal Commission on Violence in the Communications Industry*, Vol. 3. Toronto, 1977, pp. 1-155.

From the perspective of...

Youth-Serving/Child-Advocate Groups

Beyond 1984

by

Action for Children's Television (ACT)

Beyond 1984. Orwell said it! "The instrument could be dimmed" he wrote, "but there was no way of shutting it off."

Today, we watch television. In Orwell's tomorrow, television watches us. TV today is controlled by "big business." Orwell's control was "big brother"--economic power vs. political domination.

The catalog of horrors that Orwell presented to the world as a warning reminds us that there could be worse telecommunications problems than those that concern us today.

Just as there are worse problems for children than television. For example, there are 17.5 million American children and young people who live in dire poverty. Ten percent have no regular source of medical care, and 20 million have never seen a dentist. One million are victims of child abuse. And every year, one million young Americans run away from home.

Then why, faced with concerns of such serious nature, are we considering the issues of children and television? It is because those who care, those who are entrusted with a child's welfare, recognize the tremendous impact and influence that television has upon children.

And, of course, it is not just the child audience that is influenced by TV. Studies and polls have indicated that Americans get the bulk of their information from television, thus fulfilling the most dismal expectations of the medium's critics.

But the TV connection is most firmly in place for children. For they are the audience that spends between 25 and 33 hours per week watching television. The ease with which we toss about such figures is deceptive, because the numbers must startle us when we realize how they add up. By the time children reach the age of 18, they will have spent approximately 15,000 hours watching TV--more time than they will spend at any other activity except sleep; more time than they will spend in school.

The sum of all those hours and days and years, with no time off for vacations or weekends, represents more than just figures, of course. If adults are getting their information from television, so are children--and in some surprising ways! TV is the most powerful teaching machine the world has ever known. And the messages from the medium are present in every commercial and every program the children see. Information? Education? Children are learning not just how to study the stars or canvass the seas, but they're also learning--as a third grade class recently displayed--that the way to spell "relief" is R-O-L-A-I-D-S. And while one-half of the world's adults can identify their national leaders, 90 percent of American 3-year-olds recognize "Fred Flintstone."

The world children watch on TV is peopled primarily by white American males, ages 18 to 35. Women are more often witches than workers; blacks sing and play basketball; Asians are villains; and the elderly are victims. These portrayals--these stereotypes--are being perpetuated daily in our own homes, upon our own children. Television, which has a unique capacity to affect and influence attitudes, is a school of sociology, instructing children about what they may expect from others and what goals to set for themselves.

A litany of names from the 1979-80 network children's season will give some idea of the creativity and humanity that fills the airwaves on Saturday morning. There is Godzilla and his nephew Godzooky, Fangface and his cousin Fangpuss, Scooby Doo and his nephew Scrappy Doo, Yukk, Hubba Bubba, Suckerman, and Plasticman's Hawaiian sidekick, Hula-Hula--a derogatory stereotype that would make even Archie Bunker squirm.

If this suggests to you that the special needs of the child audience are not being served by commercial television, you are right. This is not a matter of personal opinion or generalized theory; it is now a matter of documentation. On October 30, 1979, the Federal Communications Commission issued its long-awaited staff report on its inquiry into children's television. And they found the project wanting. Specifically, the 800-page FCC report contends that broadcasters have failed to serve "the unique needs of the child audience" as directed in the 1974 Commission guidelines for children's television.

Pointing out that educating our children can provide immeasurable benefits to society as a whole, the FCC staff took broadcasters to task for not producing enough children's programs designed to inform and educate. The staff recommended that the FCC impose minimum educational program requirements on all stations (seven-and-one-half hours Monday through Friday), echoing ACT's long-held position that per se rules are the only way to guarantee that broadcasters comply with Commission policy. As a result of this staff report, the FCC initiated a rulemaking proceeding on children's television programming on December 19, 1979. Already the FCC action has motivated the TV industry to re-examine its commitment to children, as Variety points out in a report on the recent meeting of the National Association of Television Program Executives. "The programmers seemed inclined to think that 'better' children's fare on their outlet was a foregone conclusion at some time in the near or distant future. And they were looking." (Bob Knight, Variety, February 27, 1980)

But in side-stepping the issues of advertising targeted to children, the FCC is avoiding a question that cannot be ignored by anyone else who watches television. Children see over 20,000 commercials a year and advertisers spend over $600 million per year selling to children on TV. Children are learning from these advertising messages. They are learning that if they own a certain toy they will be happy and have friends. They are learning that if they will eat sticky sugary foods, they can be healthy and strong. What they are not learning is that 60 percent of all foods advertised to children conflict with the Surgeon General's report recommending that Americans reduce sugar consumption. The heavily sweetened, attractively packaged foods that are sold to children in animated, appealing TV ads are also in conflict with the nutritional goals established by the Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs.

That is the situation today. For tomorrow, for 1984 and beyond, ACT makes three predictions.

First, there will still be economic control of television in 1984. Although big business is preferable to big brother, there are still problems. One is the lack of diversity. With certain excellent exceptions, we get a cookie-cutter product on commercial television--easy to duplicate, profitable to manufacture. The reasons for this are clear. The commercial broadcasters are playing for serious stakes in a numbers game where only one number counts. Number One. The ratings determine revenues. This is an industry where the dominant thinking is to avoid risks and whose slogan might be "spinoffs are safer." This is an industry that minimizes its public commitment to inform and entertain and reaps the benefit of its primary purpose--to make money.

Are there other problems of economic control? A business that is operated by a particular group reflects the culture of that group. White, middle-class males run the shop. White, middle-class males are the medium's dominant characters. Equal employment opportunities are a way for women and minorities to get to a point where they too are running the show so that their views, their ideas, and energies can be represented.

In tomorrow's world of alternate technologies, is it not likely that we will still find telecommunications a business? Though there will be multiple channels, though narrowcasting will provide a broadcasting alternative, it could also mean that more is not necessarily better--that more offerings will not indicate more choice. For mediocrity can be programmed on multiple channels as well as on individual networks. When we speak of diversity as a positive goal for television, we are not just talking about numbers. We are talking about quality.

ACT's second prediction is: that the more things change, the more they stay the same. Children will still be watching too much television.

They watch a lot now. Not only do they watch a lot, they're watching more than they did before. And why not? Television is easy; it's available--98 percent of all American homes have it--and it's pleasant. A soporific for the senses.

But faster than we can comprehend, technology is shaping a vast new future for television. Diversity, choice and far-reaching possibilities are just ahead of us. Here are just a few of the new choices technology is providing:

> Television channel selections are now multiplying five or six stations to 20 or more viewing choices. Cable TV will offer 40 channels on a single cable or 80 channels on a dual-cable system.
>
> Video cassette recorders give parents greater choice in selecting the best programs and choosing appropriate times for their children to view these programs. Video recorders with increased capabilities are moving into mass production at lower costs to consumers.
>
> Video discs will allow us to purchase or rent programs of

> our own choice. Or, we can soon borrow from local libraries hundreds or even thousands of programs--14th century art, the history of dance, children's classics, the possibilities are endless.
>
> The television set itself will be transformed with two-way transmission and home computer systems.

And according to Richard Mott, vice president of the Public Service Satellite Consortium, more than half the school systems will be using electronically broadcast material produced by educational cooperatives. Technology will make us, if anything, more--not less--dependent on the electronic transmission of information.

With the potential for more active viewer participation on the part of both adults and children, we can hope that more critical viewing will occur. Consciousness can be raised to the point where televised depictions of racism, sexism, ageism will no longer be tolerated. And perhaps the number of viewing hours a week will decline at least a little bit. Perhaps.

ACT's third prediction ~~is~~: there will still be advertising to children on television. 1984 is just four years away and no image of Elysian Fields appear in the crystal ball. The expensive toys and the wrong foods will still appear on commercial television to entice new generations of young Americans. Will there be advertising on cable television? It is conceivable that a half-hour commercial for children emanating from a toy store will be in the wave of the future. There could be advertising on video discs, even though the disc is assigned for homework. Instead of the milenium, we still have a medium that sells children products they don't need at prices they can't afford--unless: regulatory procedures currently underway at the Federal Trade Commission and the Federal Communications Commission can advance, bringing about needed change.

More than ten years of child advocacy in the television industry has taught us that broadcasting's primary concern is its bottom line. ACT and numerous other organizations involved with children know that the bottom line for the future of American society is the health, education and welfare of the nation's 40 million children.

Certainly broadcasters are not responsible for the welfare of children, but they do have a responsibility in the area of health and education. They should not make the rearing of a healthy, happy child more difficult for parents and physicians. Every day, commercial television violates the first principle of medicine, to "first do no harm," and persists in acting as though no body of knowledge exists about the developmental needs and the special hazards of childhood.

The long-range interests of the society are never fully consistent with the short-range budgets and objectives of the professional managers of our communications systems. The actions of the broadcasting and advertising industries over the past ten years prove that self-regulation alone will not correct abuses.

It took continuous effort over a five-year period and a consent order from the Federal Trade Commission to stop the selling directed to young children of candy-coated pills on television.

It took five years of rulemaking at the Federal Communications Commission to reduce the advertising minutes on children's programs, and the National Association of Broadcaster's Code still permits more ads per hour to children than to adults on prime time.

Corporate executives are rewarded and promoted as a function of short-range profitability. That is why it is essential that everyone who cares about children support the establishment of regulatory guidelines for children's television. A fair hearing of the issues and a careful consideration of solutions and strategies could mean a healthier and happier 1984 for children and their families.

POSITION PAPER ON 4-H AND TELEVISION

by

Hope S. Daugherty, Acting Asst. Deputy Director
4-H Extension Service, USDA

It is difficult to speak for 54 autonomous programs since each one has a slightly different philosophical base. However, in 4-H we do have a common thread which runs throughout: helping each youth develop to his or her fullest potential; helping youth learn to make independent and wise decisions; helping youth gain experience in a learn-by-doing format. The whole area of television, television viewing, and television potential is a rather unemployed area in the 4-H program system.

There are isolated counties within states which have started selective television viewing as a function between parent/leader and child as part of their orientation and training. For the most part, the 4-H approach to television usage is by means of television programs, either already conceived or planned by 4-H as program tools for use within the actual 4-H program.

Typical of television programs which have been used in the recent past as programming aids are: FEELING GOOD, TURNED-ON CRISIS, and FOOTSTEPS. At the top of our list of television aids is our own series, MULLIGAN STEW. This is a series of eight 30-minute films on nutrition. They have proved to be (and still are) widely popular. They have been adopted by most of the fifty states for classroom use and the supporting materials for MULLIGAN STEW are ordered and reordered in great quantities each year. It is interesting to note that the supporting materials are in the form of a comic book approach. Nutrition comes off as being something not only exciting, but appealing and educational.

As time goes on, I feel that critical viewing of the television format will be a segment which we will want to emphasize more in our professional agent training, and certainly, in providing orientation and training for the more than 600,000 volunteer leaders who are the "backbone" of our 4-H organization.

THE NEEDS OF YOUTH IN THE AGE OF TELEVISION

by

Julie Gilligan
Girl Scouts of the U.S.A.

> This instrument can teach, it can illuminate; yes, it can even inspire. But it can do so only to the extent that humans are determined to use it to those ends. Otherwise, it is merely lights and wires in a box.
>
> Edward R. Murrow

I view my role in presenting this paper to be that of an advocate for creating balance in the quality and pace of life for youth. It is valid and critical that youth agencies have a strong voice in evaluation of young people's needs in the age of television. Youth-serving agencies came into existence to fill the role of surrogate parent--to be supporters and enrichers of family life. As the American family undergoes drastic change, the presence of a caring adult such as the Girl Scout leader can be crucial in the lives of young people.

Adapting to new values and family lifestyles has changed youth agency programs. The evolution of new patterns has caused blunders and experimentation which have both helped and, in some cases, had deleterious effects on growing children. Today, mature adults study parenting techniques such as "parent effectiveness." Magazines offer hints about ways to handle the children of divorce and separation along with current fashions and home decoration. Youth workers attend training (if they are fortunate) on how to involve youth, design meaningful programs, and create an atmosphere of partnership between adult and child.

At the risk of oversimplification, I propose that youth has not changed. The pace of life in most of the world has quickened. Changing family lifestyles, in many cases, deny youth adequate love, attention and direction. At the same time, youth is now steadily impacted by sensory overload and imbalance in this age of TV. Youth agencies can provide well-rounded leisure activities and the essential intermediary programs to even out this sensory overload. This conference can serve as a beginning for youth agencies to open a national network of cooperation between education, the TV and communications world, and local community programs for young people.

Today much emphasis is placed on diversion and prevention programs for juvenile delinquents. Here, too, the age of TV is under serious scrutiny and there are conflicting estimates today about how much TV violence acts as a contributing factor to promoting violent behavior in juveniles. For example, in Violent Delinquents--A Report to the Ford Foundation from the Vera Institute:

> Defective parent-child relationships are among the most frequently cited explanations for juvenile and adult violence.

> ...a massive lack of early mothering; chronic and serious childhood problems left without help...

Particularly in the United States, the study of adolescence has become a new science. Concerned parents often dread this stage of child development. Many abandon their kids by no longer insisting on restrictions and discipline. The "burnt out" teacher, youth worker, clergy and ever increasing numbers of young people turned over to the jurisdiction of the court by distraught parents are indications of this national problem.

Right here and now I would like to state my own conviction. TV and the potential media experience which has evolved and will continue to grow from this invention can be a wondrous and positive creation for this generation! My conviction stems from a "gut" feeling and a burning curiosity to comprehend how beauty, strange images, sound, color, humor, design, sports, and instant access into the lives of human beings and lands I could never otherwise know can emerge from what is affectionately termed, "the Boob Tube," in our family.

In addition, the unexpected gift of a scholarship to do graduate work which led to a Master of Arts Degree in Media Studies gave me the chance to wallow in the wonder of the TV age. There was the added enrichment opportunity to combine the research and study with my work in a youth agency setting (GSUSA). I was also fortunate to have a forward-thinking supervisor, Ms. Rena Shaefer, who spent considerable time reading course offerings at the New School as well as helping me select and critique projects which became part of everyday work plans.

A most lasting impression came from a course entitled, "TV and the Senses" taught by Lise Liepman, author of Your Child's Sensory World, which was the main text. I recommend this book to parents, teachers, youth workers and physicians. Further, I feel this text offers specific direction for all of us invited to this National Workshop on Television and Youth to become aware of how important sensory balance is to childhood development. Since TV can create overload and imbalance to the senses, I suggest that we might begin to help by evaluating sensory pattern input from whatever vantage point each of us represents. For the purpose of this conference, addressing sensory overload in young people is an appropriate role for youth agencies in the age of TV.

Premise

Sensory overload and imbalance has been one of the biggest impacts on child development in the age of television.

How to Evaluate the Impact

There is need for the medical profession, for educators, parental figures, sports and education specialists, youth agencies, religious leaders concerned with values for society, elected officials, the FCC and designated regulatory systems, those gifted in the cultural arts, foundations and corporations to:

1. Explore the impact of TV and the age of media on children.

2. Share expertise, talent, funding, and creative thinking in order to put the technology of TV in proper perspective so that it contributes positively to the quality of life.

3. Listen to children, remembering that our generation did not grow up with SESAME STREET (for better or for worse).

4. Remember that children in the slums are told to go home after school, lock the door and watch TV. (It is used as a baby-sitter.)

5. Stress the wonder and the positive opportunity for media to enlarge the horizons and offer careers that do not yet exist in the sciences and the arts as a result of the TV age.

6. Research the potential of TV to assist disabled and institutionalized young people by offering youth programs through the media.

7. Initiate a national thrust to strive for balance in children's lives by a design which will influence programming of children's TV, the school curriculum and leisure time opportunities in recreation and youth groups to blend and support a wholesome learning experience.

The Task of Youth Agencies in the Age of Television

1. Create well-rounded leisure program activities with sound educational guidelines which emphasize sensory development.

2. Recruit and train a new breed of sensitive volunteers who are aware of media impact on youth.

3. Work more closely with educators to offer different leisure time activities which are exciting and challenging. Offer the opportunity to have fun trying--whether you have talent or not.

4. Create an atmosphere of friendliness, acceptance of diversity, the chance to belong and share and to be respected by adults.

5. Offer specific guidance in career exploration--particularly in communication areas, in combinations of the arts and sciences which challenge all sensory areas.

6. Offer high-school-age youths job experience, internships with interested and qualified persons in careers, professions, which they can try themselves.

   (See From Dreams to Reality - A career exploration experience including internships for ages 6-17. Available to schools, youth agencies, and institutions from: Girl Scouts of the USA, 830 Third Avenue, New York, New York 10022.)

7. Develop a well-rounded staff of writers, trainers, and communicators within agencies who are knowledgeable and sensitive to media impact.

8. Encourage youth inter-agency collaboration to share expertise, and prevent duplication of programs.

9. Encourage inter-agency funding by foundations and corporations to develop quality and varied programs which balance school/ television programming/leisure time youth activities.

10. Use the media to spread good youth program activities for recruitment and training of high quality volunteers.

11. Use television and video for outreach to the disabled who are institutionalized, for children in temporary shelter settings, for families in stress situations, and for emergency situations.

12. Promote quality youth agencies with ads depicting young persons' opinions of exciting programs instead of advertising products. Show good role models on TV--to parents--to business--to police.

13. Use research available for program design of quality and inexpensive leisure activities for families.

    (See Southwest Educational Development Laboratory's newsletter, TV Viewer, July 27, 1979, issue no. 9. Does television make a difference in the way families spend their time together? Active and passive families are compared.)

14. Use inter-agency strength to advocate for quality programming in children's television films. Youth agencies, to date, have given poor response to FCC requests for comments. Action for Children's Television and PTA cannot do the job alone.

    (See federal Register, "FCC Children's Television Programming and Advertising Practices," August 21, 1978, Part III.)

15. Be creative and flexible about including and adjusting activities which provide the chance for parent or adult and child to learn together. Think in terms of parental needs. For example, inter-agency youth settings have provided opportunities for meaningful conferences where mothers and daughters can discuss sensitive issues such as adolescent health problems, self-protection, alcoholism, and other chemical abuses, juvenile rights, child abuse. These conferences follow prescribed guidelines recommended by agencies, and include religious leaders, community relations divisions of local or state police, the legal and medical professions, etc. The National Youthworker Education Project, funded by the Lilly Endowment, Inc., has provided training to over 800 youth workers from eight major girl-serving agencies as well as staff from corrections facilities. Main focus was the needs and problems of adolescent girls. For references and models, contact:

Dr. Ruth Teeter, Project Director
National Youthworker Education Project (NYEP)
Center for Youth Development and Research
325 Haecker Hall
1364 Eckles Avenue
University of Minnesota
St. Paul, Minnesota 55108

16. Youth agencies need to be more vocal about successful programs by reporting at major conventions and conferences of PTA and other parent organizations, school administrators, mayors, national communications and advertising groups, meetings of national religious denominations, the business sector, and the television and communications world.

17. Promote national inter-agency youth forums so that young people will take responsibility for the design of quality TV programming, and become vocal about consumerism and other needs, such as youth employment.

18. Extend membership in youth agencies to more qualified adults in communities to encourage them to become advocates for youth in the age of television.

Conclusion

A surprising national statistic reported by University of Minnesota Center for Family Research and Development deals with the fact that 50 percent of the youth in this country nave never participated in a group sports club, youth agency program, or a young people's group connected with a house of worship. Yet these programs are offered to youth in all urban and rural areas. Other statistics, stated nationally, show a high increase in truancy, school drop-outs, runaways, and an alarming escalation of delinquency in younger and younger children! How can we communicate to youth that they are wanted? Communication remains a problem. This is ironic in the age of TV.

I said in the first paragraph that youth has not changed. Today's kids need what we needed--to grow up in a caring, nurturing atmosphere; to touch, hear, smell, see, to have fun, to experience the arts, to have friends, pets, adequate food and rest. These rights of children were emphasized in 1979, The International Year of the Child.

I will close by sharing a statement of the Children's Advisory Panel of The International Year of the Child, which represented young people (ages 10 to 17) from all parts of the United States. The statement was made in my presence as a facilitator for the panel in a discussion which centered around children's concern about fear and violence.

> Television needs to tell the truth. Now in many programs, the bad guys win and take money--so children think they are the good guys. This is wrong.

It is my hope that this conference will help put the pieces of truth together for all of us.

CHILDREN AND ADVERTISING: WHAT IS INDUSTRY DOING TO REGULATE ITS CHILD-DIRECTED ADVERTISING?

by

Kathleen S. McGowan
Children's Advertising Review Unit

Since Congress has started to reexamine the Federal Trade Commission's role in regulating industry-wide marketing practices, the threat posed by the FTC's proposed children's advertising regulations has lessened considerably in its initial intensity. Yet, even during the most critical times of the children's advertising debate, industry-supported efforts at regulating child-directed advertising worked hard at responding to consumer complaints on advertising. Now, when the FTC may be forced to relinquish its far-reaching approach to children's advertising, the need for a strong self-regulatory process is apparent from the perspectives of both the public and the advertising industry.

The Children's Advertising Review Unit of the Council of Better Business Bureaus, Inc. is now in its sixth year of regulating both print and broadcast advertising directed to children. The Children's Unit is supported by companies which advertise to children to assure the truth, accuracy and fairness of child-directed advertising in the public interest.

The basic activity of the Children's Unit is the ongoing review and evaluation of advertising directed to children under 12 years of age. This is accomplished by continually monitoring print, television and radio advertising and reviewing advertisements provided voluntarily by advertisers. The Children's unit also responds to complaints from the public on specific advertisements. When advertising is found inaccurate or unfair to children's perceptions, the Children's Unit seeks modification or discontinuance through the voluntary cooperation of advertisers. All case decisions are reported in a monthly press release. Prior to production, the Children's Unit will, upon request, also review proposed advertising copy and will be given an opinion about its acceptability.

To determine what advertising technique or practices might be potentially misleading when used in children's advertising, the Children's Unit has published a special set of guidelines. The Children's Advertising Guidelines are periodically revised to reflect new insights gained from experience and research relating to children and advertising. In addition to the truth and accuracy of advertising claims, the guidelines also deal with such matters as social values, product presentation, pressure to purchase, endorsements, safety, and premiums.

Seven academic advisors with distinguished backgrounds in child psychology, the behavioral sciences, and nutrition are retained to counsel the Children's Unit. The advisors help evaluate advertising and information provided by advertisers in support of their advertising claims. They also advise on general issues concerning children's advertising and assist in the revision of the guidelines.

In addition to casework, the Children's Unit, on a regular basis, responds to correspondence from consumers, industry representatives, libraries, universities, government representatives and others. Most of this involves requests for information on the activities of the Children's Unit, and children's advertising, in general.

In 1977 the Children's Unit established the Clearinghouse for Research on Children's Advertising for the purposes of publishing a bibliography, providing a source of information on current or proposed research, and analyzing new key studies--all related to children and advertising. Both academic and industry researchers across the country keep the Clearinghouse informed of their ongoing and newly completed research. The Children's Unit has conducted many "Clearinghouse Research Searches" for industry, government and the academic community as well as responding to numerous general inquiries. The Clearinghouse is intended to be an operational bridge between researchers and advertising policy-makers. It is hoped that this activity will create an awareness of existing research and encourage future research on advertising and children.

In June 1978, the Children's Unit published the first comprehensive bibliography on children and advertising. This unique compilation of books, articles, research, speeches, and seminars--all relating to children and advertising, is being revised and reprinted during 1980. Copies of the bibliography are available on a cost basis.

To help children better understand such topics as good nutrition, saving and spending money wisely, energy conservation, dental hygiene and the difference between a program and a commercial, the Council of Better Business Bureaus, Inc., in cooperation with NBC, has produced public service announcements for children. These "Junior Consumer Tips" are regularly aired by the major networks.

Probably the most significant benefit arising from the controversy over children's advertising is the dialogue which has developed between broadcast and advertising industry policy-makers, researchers academicians, consumer advocates and government regulators. While these diverse interest groups may disagree strongly on whether television's content has been and is responsive to children's special needs, they all do agree that television should contribute to the cognitive and social development of children. Out of this dialogue has come the common recognition that in order for children to develop a balanced, undistorted view of the world, they need to acquire knowledge from a variety of sources and the skills to judge the credibliity of these information sources. Of course, the responsibility to meet these basic needs must be shared by all.

This dialogue also has led to the development of some constructive programs. One has been the introduction of elementary school courses which teach critical viewing skills for children's television watching. There has also been greater emphasis on better programming and commercial content.

Certainly there are many questions on how children perceive advertising which need to be addressed properly and investigated in the near future. To this end, it is the belief of the Children's Advertising Review Unit that the best answers will come from the cooperative work and improved communications between the various groups which are genuimely interested in the future of children.

TELEVISION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A YOUTH-SERVING ORGANIZATION

by

David F. Wynn
Boys' Clubs of America

"Ah-ah, don't touch that dial!" used to be an admonition to young people in Boys' Clubs. It was motivated out of a desire not to upset the fragile tuning of the TV set. Television technology and viewing patterns in Boys' Clubs have come a long way since then, and consequently our perspective of TV and its place in programming has changed.

I can't speak for all types of youth-serving groups across this country--only for the Boys' Clubs I've asked for data. What follows might be said to resemble the Nielson ratings which bases data on viewing preferences from 2,200 American homes. The perspectives I share are limited to the viewpoints of a fractional representation of Boys' Clubs across the country. Telephone interviews were conducted with a group of 35 staff. Efforts were made to contact Clubs located in big cities as well as small towns, with large as well as small budget operations. Geographic distribution to reflect regional differences was considered in the sampling.

Boys' Clubs are building-centered programs designed to serve youth from disadvantaged circumstances who range in age from 6 to 18 years. Each Club is governed by a board of leading community citizens and staffed by a core of professional youth workers whose services are augmented by a cadre of part-time employees and volunteers. The nearly 1,000 Boys' Clubs across the country (all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands) serve in excess of 1,000,000 members. Approximately 50 percent of our members are minority youth, 30 percent come from families on welfare, 46 percent are from single-parent families, 72 percent have four or more brothers [illegible] sters, and 65 percent of our Clubs are located in the inner-city sections of major metropolitan areas.

Open during a young person's non-school hours. Boys' Club programs are varied to appeal to the needs and interests of members. Facilities of Clubs include gymnasiums, exercise rooms, game rooms, lounges, libraries, crafts and meeting room space. Many Clubs have extensive outdoor areas and day or residence camps. Boys' Clubs have often been referred to as a member's second home because the boys spend so much time with us.

U.S. Census figures indicate that 99 percent of American homes have at least one TV set which is turned on at least six hours per day. Based on that, it was felt likely that every Boys' Club would be equipped with a TV set. Not so! My survey revealed that 20 percent of the Clubs contacted do not have a TV. These Clubs have concluded that present TV programming has nothing to contribute to the program of a Boys' Club. Of the Clubs with television, 35 percent have only one set, 30 percent have two, and the remainder have three or more sets. Half of the TVs owned by Clubs are color. Ten percent of the sets are turned on continuously from the time the Club is open until closing. Thirty percent use the sets only during certain scheduled hours and 60 percent view only selected programs. In Clubs, the sets are usually located in a game room or lounge where a variety of other activities is provided at the same time. Where sets are located in the Club, library, or special game room, use is restricted to scheduled viewing or selected programs. Clearly, the Clubs have learned to make judicious use of TV as an activity for members.

When TV is used, who watches? Members from 11 to 12 years of age watch TV in the Club more than any other age group followed by those 8 to 10 and 13 to 15, then by the 6 to 7 year olds. Those 16 years of age and older watch the least frequently. With our members, sports programs are the most popular followed by cartoons, specials, and situation comedies.

Thirty-five percent of those surveyed indicated they use TV for special purposes--usually for viewing programs which they feel will have a reinforcing educational value, or for programs which have a specialized appeal to members. Sixty percent of those surveyed felt that TV could be used more effectively in Club programming, but this would require TV programming that would relate to the goals of the Boys' Club as well as staff trained in the use of TV as a program tool. Therefore, the chances of such a combination emerging seem highly unlikely. Currently, educational TV is used to help motivate and develop reading skills. Video games are used to aid in the development of the eye and hand coordination of members. Video Workshops are seen as having program potential for enhancing reading, verbalizing, and creative and expressive skills of young members. However, the specialized equipment and staff skills needed for such programs limit its viability.

A number of Clubs (25 percent) indicated that they have had problems emerge as a result of young people watching TV. Usually, the problems are of an acting-out nature and the behavior seems to be induced by shows which feature violence. Some Clubs indicate that members who watch TV regularly tend to be more difficult to involve in other Club activities. For this reason, use of TV is controlled. Programs with a strong relationship to racial injustice such as ROOTS, THE KLU KLUX KLAN documentary, and THE HOLOCAUST have created strong, angry reactions among members. Staff in these instances have been forced into situations requiring that they interpret circumstances. Usually such a need has not been anticipated in advance and so staff members have been caught "off guard" and unprepared to handle situations as well as they might have liked.

Generally, Club leaders feel there is a need to advocate for better TV programming. To saturate Boys' Club members hour after hour with the same type of programs is not viewed as being in the best interest of the young. TV sitcoms are too often composed of individuals making comedy out of the misfortunes of others. Club leaders wonder why it is that TV families almost always have only a mother. If a father is present in a TV show, he is generally represented as a clown. So, TV scheduling as well as content is seen as leaving much to be desired.

Despite the gains in the number of performers on TV who are members of a minority, racism is as prevalent as ever. In the 1950's we had AMOS AND ANDY. Today we have as role models for minority youth, THE JEFFERSONS. If minority young people are to take their lead from TV, they will have to conclude they must be either a comedian, an athlete, or a former slave to make it big in the media.

Violence continues to abound on TV. Children see it all on TV. They see the blood, they hear the screams--but they do no feel the pain. Cartoons and even award-winning children's programs abound in violence. It comes as no surprise, then, that young people are cruel to others, especially the less fortunate people of our society. One might argue that the medical programs with their emphasis on saving life counterbalance the violence. Studies have shown 80 percent of the population have no real confidence in the health messages of all the "doctor and nurse" shows. Even in docmentary-type TV programs on health and medicine, only 17 percent of the viewers express a lot of confidence in such information. Therefore, it seems it is not a question of counter-balancing messages, but of consciously deciding not to glamorize certains types of behavior.

The National PTA in its work to reduce TV violence learned that the key institutions in today's society influencing the lives of young people are the home, school, peers and television. In our ever-changing society, Club leaders feel it more important than ever to reinforce values and a belief in a purpose and something more than ourselves. Club leaders clearly recognize that in few forms of TV entertainment is there a hint of a belief in any form of a deity.

Because the family, even in its changing form, is a cornerstone of society, some Club staff believe we should attempt to influence families as to the types of programs they watch and the amount of time TV is viewed. It was suggested that Boys' Clubs of America or consortiums of community-based groups should get together to rate TV programs. The staff felt that major emphasis should be placed on encouraging more family involvement in watching TV and engaging family members in conversation about what has been seen. Perhaps this would encourage more interaction in families, as well as foster greater word usage. However, how this could be attained is not certain, and Clubs expressed the desire for guidance and assistance in this regard.

Surprisingly, Club leaders felt one of the real needs today is for a "living history" interpretation of the daily news for young people. Young people have a limited understanding of political and economic intricacies. Such a program could do much to help young viewers gain a more realistic appraisal of the times and the inter-relationships between systems within society and among the nations of the world.

However, the real need of our times is for opportunities that foster creativity, that engender one with a feel of success and competency, that provide tests of one's skills in leadership and decision making, that help to generate a vitality and a zest for life. TV does not fill that need. In fact, Club leaders feel the overall impact of TV is a negative one, and so its use in Boys' Clubs is more judicious than ever. Across the county, Club leaders are saying, "Ah-ah, don't touch that dial, unless it is to turn off the set." And to our way of thinking that is a very healthy development.

IV. RESULTS OF SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

YOUTH LEADERS GROUP

Facilitator: Karen Bartz, Campfire

National youth organizations recognize the impact of television in many direct and indirect ways upon our nation's youth. However, the priority placed by youth organizations upon this issue is not as great as other issues such as juvenile justice, employment, and drug abuse.

Youth agencies are concerned about two major aspects of television: (a) content of program and advertising materials, and (b) process of television viewing. Both aspects influence all agencies' successful attainment of general goals related to active, informal educational experiences which develop self-potential, decision-making, competence and creativity.

Television content. Any aspect of television program content potentially has positive and negative impacts upon youth agencies and youth. For example, program content may present role models which facilitate a youth's realization of his or her potential, or role models which stereotype and otherwise restrict future options. Youth agencies support the conduct and dissemination of research related to both the positive and negative influences of program content.

Youth agencies can have an impact upon the content of television and the impact of content on youth through two general approaches, (a) advocacy, individually and collectively, related to the content of programs and advertising, and (b) youth programming which helps to develop critical viewing skills so that television programs can be judged for realism, stereotyping, relevance, production quality, etc.

Television Viewing Process. The process of television viewing refers to the influence of viewing upon time use and family interaction. Much of television programming promotes a style of learning (e.g., passive and determined by others) which is not compatible with the philosophies of youth organizations. There appears to be a need for more research to investigate the extent to which TV viewing displaces involvement in other activities. The process of viewing also has important effects upon family interaction and communication patterns. Youth agencies can involve youth and their parents in constructive communication around the viewing experience.

Some special concerns and interests of youth agencies include, (a) avoiding duplication of school curricula, and (b) utilizing television as an art form and a means of expressing creativity.

PARENT LEADERS GROUP

Facilitator: Jean Dye, National PTA

The parent leaders found consensus on several assumptions before developing specific recommendations:

The problem is multi-faceted and the solutions must be variegated.

Television is influential; it can be both destructive and constructive.

Parental oversight of children's television viewing is part of a broader socioeconomic concern.

There are many different kinds of families--a wide range of socioeconomic and ethnic-cultural variations.

There are parents who are not being reached.

There are parents who, understanding that children receive many moral and value-laden messages from television, are satisfied with these messages.

Parents must be helped to realize there are potential problems related to television and that their actions can make a difference.

Total hours of viewing time should be reduced.

In some situations, it is better for the child to be watching television than to be "out on the streets." Many children simply spend many hours alone while parents work.

Critical viewing skills, in the broadest sense, are a school curriculum as well as a home function, activity and responsibility.

The parent group made the following recommendations:

Make the importance of TV an issue of national concern--because the implications of television for and upon family life are all pervasive and important.

Develop a strong national coalition. Assist education of the TV industry, parents, educators, youth groups and youth.

Involve parent groups and major organizations concerned with child care, child health and child welfare, including religious institutions, and youth-serving groups.

Expand involvement to individuals and groups who are "not in the mainstream."

Help parents to understand that TV can be constructive and destructive; they can control amount of child viewing in both subtle and overt ways. They can help their children become selective in amount of TV viewed.

Help parents to understand the educational, social and developmental advantages in watching television with their children.

Encourage parents to use issues and incidents portrayed on television as a springboard for meaningful discussion (i.e., abortion, family styles, handicaps, etc.)

Help the federal government to assume a more active role in programming, advertising, funding projects, establishing a clearinghouse, and enacting legislation supporting children's television programming.

Develop and disseminate information materials to help parents, children and youth.

EDUCATORS GROUP

Facilitator: Rosemary Lee Potter

The educators group included participants from both instruction and administration at all levels, as well as researchers and TV-related project directors. It was recommended that:

Principals, administrators, boards should obtain and be given more information on school TV use, including the needs of students and teachers for such programming.

Teachers should be involved in developing TV-related projects, both in school and by the networks.

Teacher education should include educational technology and strategies for classroom use and instruction.

Inservice and staff development should include specific and appropriate training in how to use new TV viewing skills as well as how to work with parents regarding such programs, materials, etc.

Teachers and parents should be invited behind the screen to local studios, both to learn about the medium and to develop a local cooperative relationship among parents, teachers and broadcasters on behalf of children.

While it is difficult to obtain consensus on the ratings and valuing of TV programming, all agree that the general improvement of the quality of children's programs should be encouraged.

Insufficient funding may be a major reason why informaton is not a priority on any list. Money should be sought for program improvement and informaton distribution from network affiliates, sponsors, and other organizations. Furthermore, it appears that cooperation is the ultimate key to obtaining a more constructive use of television in school and community.

TELEVISION PROFESSIONALS GROUP

Facilitators: Lee Polk and Debbi Bilowit

The TV industry group was composed of representatives from the three major commercial networks, public television, educational television, television producers and television researchers. The group made the following recommendations:

Incorporate non-stereotyped characters into currently popular programs.

Utilize a variety of forms of comedy in a balanced way.

Anticipate children's needs and try to address them:
- a. specially funded research
- b. draw upon current educational research

Conduct informal dialogue concerning issues of social concern and how TV programs can help address these within current context (even as part of background or subtext).

Encourage producers to talk to children about their lives, concerns and interactions with peers and to talk to people who work with children.

Invite educators to TV stations to find out about the business of TV's development of programs.

Sponsor informal dialogues between researchers and producers.

Explore alternative scheduling so children don't have to choose between two good programs at peak times, or so that children need not give up a non-TV activity to see the program (many children enjoy repeats):
- a. repeat in prime time if not originally shown then.
- b. utilize Saturday mornings for repeats.
- c. make videotapes available to schools.
- d. non-competitive scheduling.
- e. use afternoon time for repeats of these programs.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK FORCES

TASK FORCE ONE

Task Force One discussed ways educators, parents, the television industry could work with youth-serving organizations to develop collaborative opportunities at the national and local levels.

National:

Disseminate information on how television can be used within each agency system, including how to train volunteer leaders.

Youth agencies should use existing coalitions for the purpose of advocacy.

National youth agencies should capitalize on the expertise of existing television production and broadcasting companies as a means of reaching agency goals for youth.

Youth participation should be encouraged at all levels of planning related to the TV industry.

Local:

Youth agencies should seek the assistance of universities and other media training centers to provide training for paid and volunteer staff and media development.

Youth groups should utilize local TV stations as excellent resources to learn about the industry.

Youth groups should seek assistance from other groups (PTA) to provide training in awareness and skills for agency staff.

Equipment in schools and other places should be offered for use by agencies since purchase of equipment is a major obstacle to its use by volunteer leaders.

When parents and youth are together (e.g., meetings, camps) the program should include aspects of television use and abuse.

Youth members should be encouraged to give input to TV industry via letters with comments, criticism, etc., of specific programs.

TASK FORCE TWO

Task Force Two discussed ways educators, the television industry, and youth leaders could work with parents.

Help parents develop skills in organizing of non-TV activities to engage children's interest: games, sports, storytelling, the arts, reading.

Help parents see how they--as families--can watch good shows together.

Parents must not be made to feel more inadequate as parents.

The process must not be adversative but cooperative, collaborative.

Develop a school focus on engaging parents in their children's learning process, including dealing with TV viewing.

Form coalitions to urge more inservice training and more teacher training education in using television by universities.

Coalition memberships should be wide. School presentation should include non-public schools, universities, and community colleges.

Train coalition leaders in leadership skills and in media literacy.

There should be continued research on how parents are using television today.

TASK FORCE THREE

Task Force Three developed recommendations of ways in which community and educational organizations can work with television stations to improve the direction and content of television programs for children.

> Concerned groups should pool representatives to approach the television industry. A coalition of citizens groups should arrange meetings under a "neutral" umbrella with representatives from the TV industry (including the American Association of Advertising Agencies and the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences) to make recommendations.
>
> Community organizatons should combine forces to build audiences and ratings for programs of value--particularly those intended for children.
>
> Concerned community and educational groups should invite people from the industry to talk with them, to estabish a dialogue.
>
> Community groups should join forces with research groups to explore the impact of community efforts and television programs and report to the television industry.
>
> Youth-oriented groups and coalitions such as the National Coalition for Youth should establish a television program evaluation system which can be used by its members--including such points as "boring" as well as "excellent."
>
> Community groups should join forces with TV stations to increase the effectiveness of PSAs regarding children and family viewing of television. Those PSAs should be broadcast in conjunction with a community awareness effort, perhaps also combined with institutional advertising. In addition, station managers should be urged to do their best to schedule PSAs at favorable times.
>
> Local stations should be encouraged to establish a community advisory committee to evaluate syndicated series they plan to purchase and broadcast.
>
> Community groups should actively support the production of local children's programs.
>
> National organizations should examine government policy and advocate for a rewriting of regulations regarding production of government-funded television programs to include the opportunity of making the programs available to commercial television stations as well as public television stations.

TASK FORCE FOUR

Task Force Four discussed ways parents, educators and youth leaders could work collaboratively with television industry.

> Inservice training to teachers and college training should be provided on understanding TV and constructive uses of various media, technology, etc. A collaboration between educators, independents, cable, networks, universities might be wise.
>
> Guidelines (criterion references) for pre- and post-production self-evaluation by the TV industry should be developed. Producers, writers, and communication schools should be involved in developing the guidelines.
>
> Encourage parent education in a variety of formats to help parents realize their roles as primary mediators of television through brochures, PSAs, drop-ins, and talking with parents at meetings, PTAs, etc.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSIONS

It is difficult, if not impossible, to identify the outcomes of the Workshop. However, the overwhelming consensus was that despite the many existing problems and misunderstandings, there is a need and a desire to carry on the initiatives established during the two days of the workshop.

At least two broad recommendations can be abstracted from the many ideas and suggestions.

> A research program on the age-specific television-related needs and abilities of children and youth should be conducted to provide the basis for establishing television industry standards for the production of programs and commercials to be viewed by significant child and youth audiences.
>
> A national network of parents, youth leaders, educators and television professionals should be developed to facilitate the sharing of information and facilitate cooperative efforts.

The Workshop built toward a growing awareness among all participants of the need for them to encourage their friends and colleagues to work together to make the television viewing experience positive and educational for all children and youth. It was the hope of everyone that the Workshop marked the beginning of this difficult but important effort.